

LONE SASHA GREY GAMES DAVID RODIGAN SOUTH AFRICAN HOUSE FATIMA

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Fatima	10
Shigeto	12
Jacques Greene	14
Elijah & Skilliam	16
Five Star: Sasha Grey	22
Ramadanman	26
South African House	34
Games	42
Matthewdavid	50
Lone	56
Rafaël Rozendaal	60
Album Reviews	67
Bubblin'	70
Miles Whittaker: In the Studio	72
Horsepower Productions' Tape Delay Tips	74
Components & Videogames	76
Outbox: David Rodigan	80

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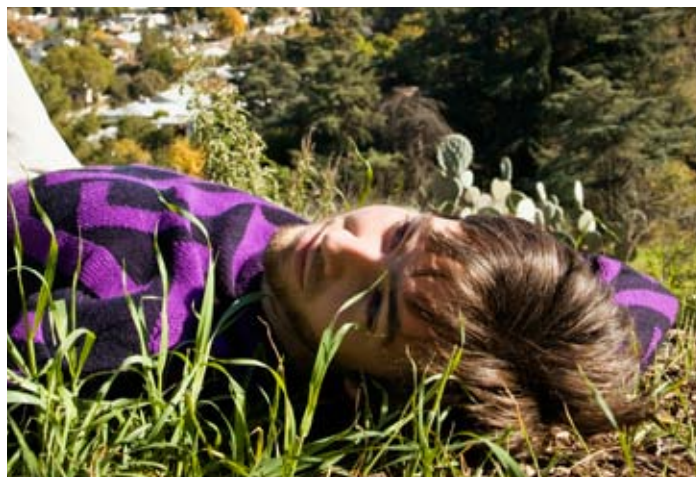
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GRAZING IN THE GRASS: MATTHEWDAVID, SHOT IN LA BY CHLOE AFTEL

Back in 2002, in an issue whose cover was graced by Horsepower Productions (see them on page 72 of this issue), Steve Goodman (a.k.a. Kodeg) co-authored a story in which the term "dubstep" was coined. (At least that's how the lore goes, if you query Wikipedia and such.) Like every genre in history, dubstep eventually took on a life of its own, splintered a billion times, went left, right, back, and forth, and at some point spun itself into what we've been (very) loosely referring to as "2-step/garage/funky/bass/post-dubstep/house/hardcore-continuum-whatchamacallit." Sounds sort of ludicrous, right? (And yes, we know that some folks are still making straight-up dubstep wobblers.) We (the collective music press) toyed for a while with just tacking "post-" onto everything, but now that we are, for all intents and purposes, in the post-post era, what do we do? Throw out genres all together? Well, considering how fluid all the artists are that we're covering in this issue, that's not so difficult to imagine.

Cover star Ramadanman (a.k.a. David Kennedy, who also happened to shoot the photographer who shot him, Shaun Bloodworth, for his contributor portrait) represents the still-shifting tide of what was once dubstep, and writer Walter Wasacz examines how the young Londoner's 808-heavy new direction (like last year's "Glut" and "Work Them") takes from juke as much as—if not more than—jungle and other UK strains.

Matthew "Matthewdavid" McQueen, a fixture on LA's beat scene, does everything from co-producing Flying Lotus tracks to running the all-over-the-place Leaving Records, but it's maybe his psychedelic edge, his penchant for digging through ambient reel-to-reels and Bell Biv DeVoe cassettes rather than funk vinyl crates, that makes him a prime candidate for this musically amorphous issue. Andy Hermann visited with McQueen in his LA home to get into the mind of the dreamy soundscapes he is about to release on FlyLo's Brainfeeder label. (And for a super-exclusive window inside this old soul, enter this month's contest, where you can win a one-of-a-kind mixtape handcrafted by Matthewdavid himself.)

Over in Johannesburg, South Africa, the same breakdown of genres continues. Sure, we're still calling what DJ Cleo and DJ Clock make "South African house," but, as writer Nduduzo Ngobese finds, the music's roots run deep, and spread out in all directions of the underground—kwaito, shangaan electro, Chicago house, traditional African music... and that's to say nothing of the country's 11 official languages that influence the sound's ever-evolving rhythms. It's safe to say that with any trend piece we've done in the last few years—Chillwave? Funkstep?—the thrust of the story is just as much about how divergent the styles can be as it is about what commonly threads them together.

Assistant Editor Patric Fallon underscores the point with his feature on Lone, who has made it his mission to jump styles as often as possible, and his latest record, *Emerald Fantasy Tracks*, throws his old blunted-beat fans for a loop of the Detroit techno/Chicago acid variety. And yes, of course it sounds at home right next to a Ramadanman postjokelectroacousticchicagogamelan jam, if you catch our drift.

—Ken Taylor, Editor

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Ramadanman, shot in Leeds by Shaun Bloodworth

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Sonnenzimmer is a Chicago-based art and screen-printing studio run by Nadine Nakanishi and Nick Butcher. The couple merges backgrounds in typography, printmaking, graphic design, and fine art to create hand-crafted posters, books, music packaging, and illustration. Working closely with Chicago's bustling free-jazz community, Sonnenzimmer has found a place where experimentation and abstraction are both respected and demanded. They illustrated this issue's feature on the South African house scene.

sonnenzimmer.com

DANNA TAKAKO HAWLEY



Sometimes found in London (where she lived for nearly a decade), sometimes Chicago (where she's from originally), sometimes New York (where she lives now), but with her heart in Detroit, Danna Takako Hawley is a nomad at best. While holding down the press department at Fabric in London for the past six years, she's written for a variety of magazines and websites around the way. She's currently starting a music/art PR-and-writing creative agency, .takako. Danna wrote about Elijah & Skilliam for this issue of *XLR8R*.

hellotakako.com

SU WU



Los Angeles writer Su Wu maintains the blog *I'm Revolting*, a rigorously disorganized compendium of things and ideas that has been called "cool" by such luminaries as internet strangers and the editor of this magazine. She recently spent some time in the Mojave desert and started a tumbleweed collection but is thinking of dismantling it because one, tumbleweeds take up a lot of space, and two, they deserve to be free. For this issue, Su interviewed hotel resident and web artist Rafaël Rozendaal.

imrevolting.net

SHAUN BLOODWORTH



The UK's heaviest snowfall in many a year failed to put cover photographer Shaun Bloodworth off shoots with Ramadanman (who in turn shot Bloodworth, above) at Hyde Park in Leeds, and Lone in Ancoats, Manchester. Shaun has documented underground music for the past six years, as a photographer and a filmmaker, both in the UK and the US. He is currently planning a digital project with LuckyMe, shooting music videos, and mounting a large exhibition. Whilst his friends worry about pension funds, he Ustreams at The Boiler Room Live. He admits that, at his age, he should know better.

shaunbloodworth.com

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PODCAST



NICOLAS JAAR, T.WILLIAMS, AND CANBLASTER

In the last few months, we've gone a bit gaga for Nicolas Jaar's brand of low-slung techno and house. So naturally we tapped the 21-year-old New Yorker to lace us with a podcast of his favorite goodies from all across the board. London basshead T.Williams, another youngster who happens to head up Deep Teknologi when he's not producing his own house-flavored gems, sent us a mix of anthems from the UK underground. And just when you thought that was enough, France's Canblaster, a maker and remixer of all things banging and bouncing, also contributed an exclusive set to kickstart 2011.

Get your dose of can't-miss hotness and sign up for our weekly podcast at XLR8R.com, where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum, including new sets from Terror Danjah, Oro11, Brenmar, and tons more.

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JAN/FEB NO. 137

Music and videos from Ramadanman, Lone, DJ Cleo, and more

Untold on XLR8R TV

Exclusive XLR8R podcasts from Matthewdavid and Elijah & Skilliam

A GIF conversation with Thunderhorse

2010's best albums, tracks, podcasts, videos, and more

A new extended Elements column

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NOV/DEC NO. 136

Music and videos from oOo00, Oriol, Nguzunguzu, and more

Friends With You's Miami City Guide on XLR8R TV

Exclusive XLR8R podcasts from Moby and Teengirl Fantasy

Extended interviews with Robin Guthrie and Squarepusher

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XLR8R'S "BEST BET FOR 2011" CONTEST

WIN SOME FRESH JAMS AND HOT VIDEOGAMES IF TELL US YOUR FAVORITE NEW ARTIST!

2011: a brand-new year full of potentially endless possibilities. For lovers of music everywhere, another year means more fresh sounds, new favorite albums, unheard artists, and burgeoning music trends that will fill our ears and excite our minds over the next 365 days. Everyone has their own prospects for who will be wowing us in the months to come, and we want you to tell us all about your hopefuls. Who are they? Why are you so excited about their next single/EP/album? What do you think they'll do for the music world? To win this issue's contest, tell us about the DJ/producer/musician/band that you're most excited to hear new music from in 2011, and why, in 200 words or less.

Whoever makes the best case for their new-year fave will score a copy of a couple of hot videogames, *Tron: Evolution* (Disney) and *Dead Space 2* (EA), along with music from some of the artists featured in this issue, including an exclusive, handmade mixtape from Matthewdavid, Games' *That We Can Play* EP (Hippos in Tanks), Laurel Halo's *King Felix* EP (Hippos in Tanks), and Shigeto's album, *Full Circle* (Ghostly). So, get to gushing about your best bet for 2011's music, and you just might come up on some serious gear!

One grand-prize winner will receive: a copy of each videogame, Shigeto's *Full Circle* CD, and Matthewdavid's *Lost Ambient Tracks* mixtape.
Four runners up winners will receive: a copy of each videogame, Shigeto's *Full Circle*, Games' *That We Can Play* EP, and Laurel Halo's *King Felix* EP.

deadspace.ea.com, disney.go.com/tron, ghostly.com, leavingrecords.com, hipposintanks.net



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FATIMA



A SWEDISH SOUL SONGSTRESS FINDS A PLACE IN LONDON'S
BUBBLING SLOW-JAM UNDERGROUND.

If you've spent any time at London's Plastic People club, you know that the musical fare on tap changes nightly. It's on this eclectic menu where you're most likely to be served the mellifluous floetry and soulful cookin' of Fatima Brama-Sey, the first lady of Floating Points' and Alexander Nut's Eglo Records, one of the hottest young labels in London. This is largely due to the fact that, at the mic, the 25-year-old known simply as Fatima is electric. Her ability to improvise and cover a wide range of musical styles was an inspiration to Nut, who quickly became a fan and invited the young Swede into the Eglo fold.

With *Mindtravelin'*, the young singer's debut EP, she brought the electricity of her live performance into the studio, where some hotly tipped producers supplied the driving funk beats for the stellar four-song mix of nostalgic and modern sounds. The record manages to classily meld London's penchant for retro-soul stylings with LA's Stones Throw/beat-scene vibe, particularly on the Dam-Funk-assisted slow jam, "Warm Eyes," and the sizzling Funkineven collaboration, "Soul Glo." "I think growing up in the '90s, when you had all these dope singers around—Aaliyah, Missy, Brandy, Mary [J. Blige], TLC—it was impossible not to get inspired in some way," she says of some of the more immediate reference points for her unmistakable sound. But that's to say nothing of the funk and soul artists like George Clinton, Rudy Rae Moore, and Betty Davis who also perked her ears up. "Imagine that collabo! Pretty mad," she comments.

Fatima's musical approach is also deeply tied to her own diverse roots. Growing up in Sweden as the child of a Senegalese/Gambian, "music-lovin'" mom who owned a boutique in Stockholm that traded in African wares, Fatima was exposed to the rich vibrations of West African music from an early age, sparking an interest in the many musical styles that African rhythms have engendered. Now she's managed to bring all those raw styles together. "The combination between soul and electronic sounds is the future," she offers. "On the other hand, it doesn't matter what instruments you've got to make tunes—the mind is the only thing that can limit yourself at the end of the day."

Lately, Fatima has been working on a new record with Floating Points. "I think this EP feels a bit more live, in the sense that we actually both recorded in the same room, playing our instruments live simultaneously," Fatima says. "It's a mix of written tunes and improvised sentences and melodies." Though she proved her studio chops on *Mindtravelin'*, the energetic Fatima is eager to infuse her new EP with that inimitable energy of live performance—it's what she's in the game for: "I just love that raw, pure energy from the bumpin' soundsystem, and the people dancin', lettin' loose, jellyshakin', and head-boppin'," she says. "Not thinkin' about tomorrow and just livin' for the moment."

The *Mindtravelin'* EP is out now on Eglo. mindtravellin.blogspot.com

SHIGETO

TAKING A JAZZMAN'S APPROACH, A POST-DILLA ACOLYTE BUILDS
ON MICHIGAN'S BEAT LEGACY.



For a generation of bedroom producers, now is the time to get their due—at least according to beat-geek extraordinaire Zach Saginaw, who performs and records as Shigeto. "I think the need for an MC or the need for lyrics [is] not as dominant. It's not anything against that—it's just that finally producers are getting more credit," he says. "Ten years ago you'd say, 'Oh, I love this song,' but you never knew who produced it and no one ever really cared. But now producers are becoming their own thing and getting so much more credit."

That certainly seems to be the case for the Brooklyn-based Shigeto. Saginaw has got two EPs and a stunning full-length under his belt on Ghostly International, a fitting label to disseminate his densely layered, hip-hop-inspired electronic music, which sonically bears a close association with the LA school of beatmakers. "It's kind of a phenomenon, the beat scene," says Saginaw. "I think,

in a lot of ways, the death of J Dilla influenced it. It was a tragic thing, but it kind of set off this invisible torch to other people, mainly being Flying Lotus. He took that torch and took it to the next level."

How the beat scene got to that level is collaborative and wide ranging; for Shigeto, it lies in his upbringing. He was raised in Dilla's native Michigan, a hotbed for forward-thinking music over the years. "[Growing up in Michigan] shaped me in every way, pretty much," he says. He grew up playing jazz drums and listening to Motown and hip-hop, but it wasn't until the start of Ghostly International in 1999 that Shigeto's eventual style began to really take form. "When I started hearing all the first releases from Ghostly, it kind of opened me up to more electronic stuff. I was [already] into classic Warp records—Boards of Canada, Aphex Twin, Squarepusher, and all that—but I guess when I heard Dabrye's *One/Three*, I was

just blown away. I was like, 'I gotta get into this.'"

Saginaw has done much more than get into it. His debut full-length, *Full Circle*, is a cerebral voyage into a world of rich textures and elegant, punctuated rhythms. Parts hip-hop, jazz, and techno, the album takes these bits and turns them into a wildly cohesive work, and it's not by accident. "I think the one thing I had for *Full Circle* was the palette," he says. "I knew that I had these certain sounds, or reoccurring themes, throughout the whole album. I think the sounds define an album. If you have the same palette underneath, it's going to be cohesive—it's going to sonically fit."

While the fit is tight, Shigeto doesn't plan to stop evolving musically. "I think one of my main goals is figuring out my new approach and having it be more human," he says, adding, "I guess I want it to be a jazz approach with more spontaneity. But I haven't quite figured out how I want to do it."

Full Circle is out now on Ghostly International.
iamshigeto.com

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JACQUES GREENE



A MONTREAL NEWCOMER TAKES ON R&B DIVAS AND
HOUSE WITH A BORROWED 303.

The Montreal DJ/producer who calls himself Jacques Greene (yep, it's an alias) has a knack for making house grooves that toy with emotions, often dancing between euphoria and melancholia in the same breath. "If you're trying to make music with a feeling, it's more interesting to show something nuanced, like something in real life, such as a relationship," he says about his yin-yang ethic. On his breakout single, "(Baby I Don't Know) What You Want," which appeared on the *Night Slugs Allstars Volume 1* compilation, such a clash breaks out, where sung and looped phrases ping-pong between a baritone male vocal and a chipmunk-speed female one. A shy, acid synth riff trickles into the argument while an upbeat, pulsating house rhythm keeps the drama alive.

These reflections come naturally from the 21-year-old's imagination, which is heavily informed by Warp's golden years. "When I first heard Boards of Canada, I realized that I didn't need to start a band—I could make very emotional and very human electronic music," he recalls. The flash and drama of R&B pop also left its fingerprint on him. "It's funny because there's the dichotomy of listening to Aphex Twin, but I can always fall back on a Rihanna single," he says.

Greene's musical roots took hold with the mysterious machines that surrounded him at an early age. He witnessed his uncle record music for advertisements in his home studio. "It was all way over my head, but it was a mysterious world that was pulling me in," he remembers. Greene never left that world. His father's Roland drum machine lessons that began for him at age eight also kept him there. Greene's studio arsenal later expanded to vintage analog synths and the Les Paul of acid, the Roland TB-303, on loan from a pal. "I just borrow it off of him all the time," Greene says, laughing. But it's his zest for hacking up R&B diva vocals into bare consonants that seems like his best secret weapon. Consider "The Look," where bare bits of one unnamed diva's voice shout for attention and boost the funk. "You keep the spirit of the track when you have the melody between the words," he explains. "It's really cool to capture that because it's even more accurate than what the lyrics are saying about the emotion."

Last year, those emotional vibes caught the attention of Glaswegian abstract-beat label LuckyMe, which released his *The Look* EP. A debut album that disregards BPM counts and genre rules may come soon. "I'd like to take it out of the club entirely," Greene says. Like back home, in the bohemian borough of Plateau Mont-Royal? "Everyone [there] is on their own wavelength, which is better," he argues. "Everybody is very, very different from one another and I think that's a really healthy thing for a city to have musically."

The Look is out now on LuckyMe. soundcloud.com/jacquesgreene

ELIJAH & SKILLIAM

RINSE FM UPSTARTS AND BUTTERZ CEOS REP GRIME'S NEW CLASS.



"I never 'discovered' grime," DJ Elijah, one half of the Rinse FM DJ team Elijah & Skilliam, assuredly states. "I'm from East London—I was born into it. Everyone used to listen to pirate radio at school and have tapes; it was more of a taboo if you *weren't* into it."

London's grime scene has never been a particularly open one. Rarely leaving its East End breeding ground, it's also been notoriously locked from the inside, with impossibly high barriers. "Grime is so insular, the scene is like a big family—you have to be brought in by someone," says Elijah. Along with Skilliam, the first-names-only pair, most often heard on their high-energy Thursday show on Rinse FM, got their in from the scene's godfather, Terror Danjah, who ended up helming the first release on their Butterz imprint, in March of last year. "I think everyone associates grime with Playstation-type beats, and Terror Danjah's not that at all," Elijah explains. "He's got a real polished sound, but he's still got the edgy styles and edits,

and his drums are just crazy. It's not what you think it's gonna be, if you think grime's some child's music."

Since their Rinse debut in late 2008, Elijah & Skilliam have been instrumental in grime's recent evolution, repopulating it from a hyped, MC-filled landscape to DJs and producers standing tall on their own. "In grime," Elijah explains, "if MCs like your beats, you're considered the best producer. A lot of the stuff that we're into is not always easy for an MC to sit on. SRC is one of them people, for instance." That's true; it's hard to imagine any flow working atop SRC's winding 8-bit melodies on 'Gomba VIP,' from the multi-artist *Quality Street* EP, the label's second release. All Butterz artists (an army that includes Swindle, D.O.K., TRC, Mr. Mitch, and Royal T) step with precise swagger from a different corner of UK bass culture, melting together disparate sounds to create slamming, unpredictable grime anthems.

Though they're "not on any sort of 'takeover' vibe," Butterz has quickly spread

all over the globe. "We're just doing what we like doing," says Elijah. It's no wonder the music world is hanging on their every beat, when each move is pressed with bright artwork (from teenage designer David Kelly) that's as distinctive and crisp as their sound. "If it was regional, it wouldn't be feasible. That's the motto," says Elijah. "We sold nearly 200 Butterz t-shirts with our last run. The mad thing is, guess how many of those sales were from London? 13!" Merch is flying out of the Butterz shop, which sells everything from their highly sought tees to something rarely seen on the grime radar: vinyl. "If we'd chosen to do the label digital, people wouldn't even check for it—there would be no value in it," informs Elijah, while packing their latest batch of clear vinyl. "For us, because we go through so many tunes, how would we differentiate the upper-level quality from the bog-standard tune? We had to separate the men from the boys."

GO
Listen to Elijah & Skilliam's *XLR8R* podcast at XLR8R.com/157extras.

D.O.K.'s "Chemical Planet" b/w "Keep Making Grime" is out now on Butterz. verybutterz.blogspot.com



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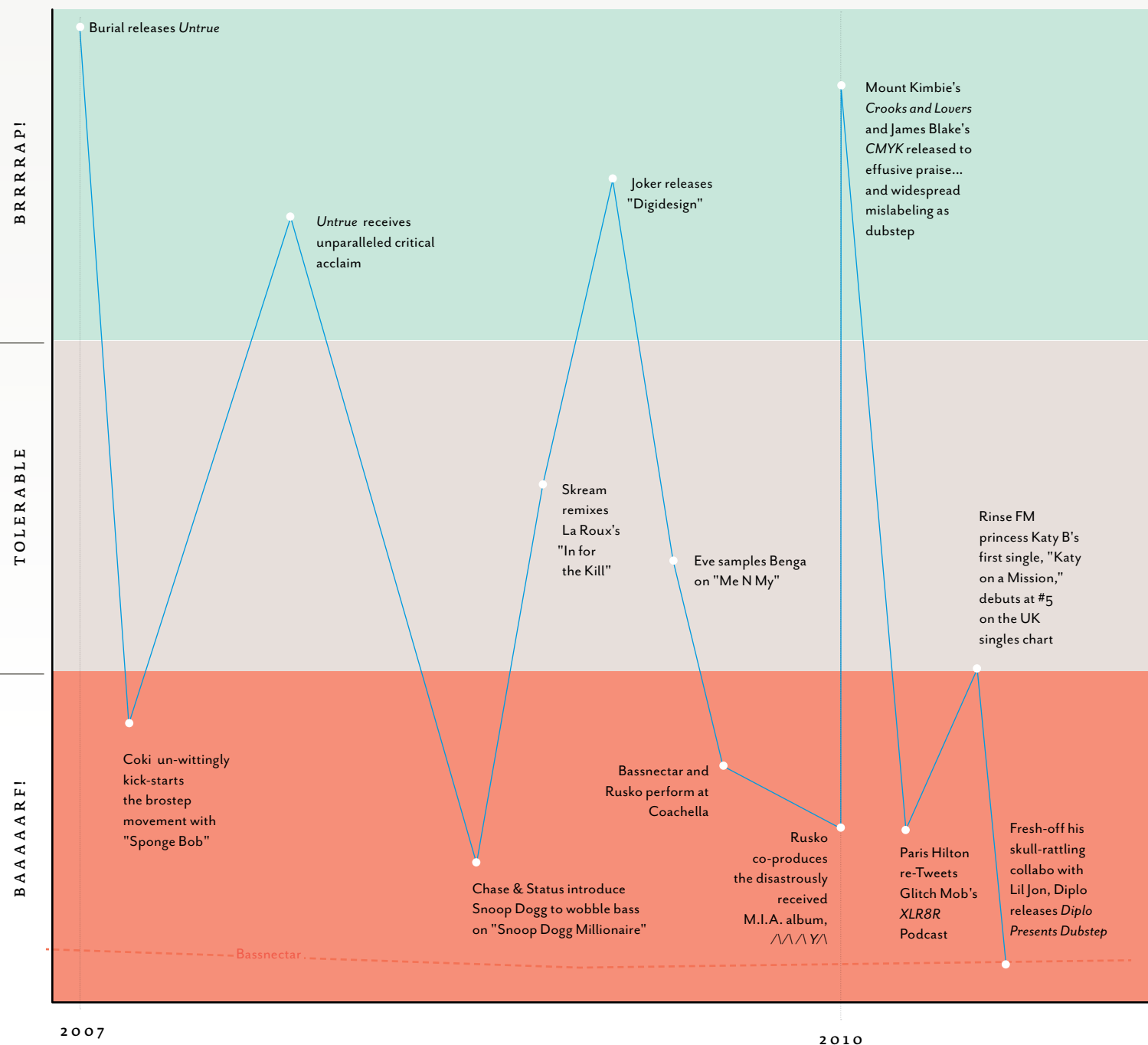
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THE DUBSTEP-POP TAKEOVER

Remember a few years back when Burial was getting reviewed in *Spin* and showing up on *All Songs Considered*? Well, since dubstep slowly began to enter the mainstream back around 2007, it's sorta taken a nosedive. From setting up shop at hippie raves all over Colorado and Oregon to nasty wobblers landing on every frat bro's iPod, here we chart the trajectory of dubstep's pop takeover.



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LABELS WE LOVE

R & S

THE BELGIAN TECHNO POWERHOUSE RETURNS FOR ROUND TWO.

It's hard to imagine the techno world of the late '80s and '90s without Belgium's R&S Records. The Ghent-based label not only first introduced Aphex Twin to the world, but it was also the home of some of the era's biggest names and releases, from Derrick May to System 7 to Joey Beltram, whose "Energy Flash" might be the label's most famous single. The story of Renaat Vandepapeliere's and Sabine Maes' imprint is well-known by now: After more than 10 years of mostly excellent releases, the label succumbed to trends (such as D&B), oversaturated the market, and its founders became disgusted by commercial elements in the music industry. For nearly eight years, R&S lay dormant, though its legacy never decreased: It became the sort of label that's talked about reverently by both producers and partygoers alike.

But in 2006, the label was reborn, and has been churning out new music and reissues ever since. Favorites like May's *Innovator* best-of compilation and Model 500's *Classics* have been re-released in new packages, but they come along with exciting new work from Radio Slave, Shlomi Aber, Pariah, and James Blake. While the Radio Slave and Model 500 releases still assure that the label is entrenched in techno, it is perhaps the post-dubstep aesthetic of Blake which is most representative of the label's new curatorial aim, as Blake's skittering sonic experimentations and Pariah's exemplary take on UK funky show that R&S isn't resting on its laurels, something that can't always be said of other imprints with such astounding history behind them. And with upcoming cuts from five-piece Vondelpark and wonky dubstep master Blawan, R&S has once again cemented its place in the electronic dance music pantheon. Here are a few of the label's finest to date. *Thomas Rees*



Various Artists
PCPEP (1992)

Though Joey Beltram and Aphex Twin might have more famous releases on the label, this EP of tracks by different pseudonyms of producer Marc Trauner was one of the key records of the era. "Nightflight (Nonstop to Kaos)" and "We Have Arrived" are classics of dark, minimal hardcore—some have even called the latter a proto-gabber track. The b-side embodies a sunnier Detroit vibe on "Illuminated" and gorgeous moodiness with "Energy Tanks," rounding out an EP that has a bit for every techno taste, a prescient formula for its time.



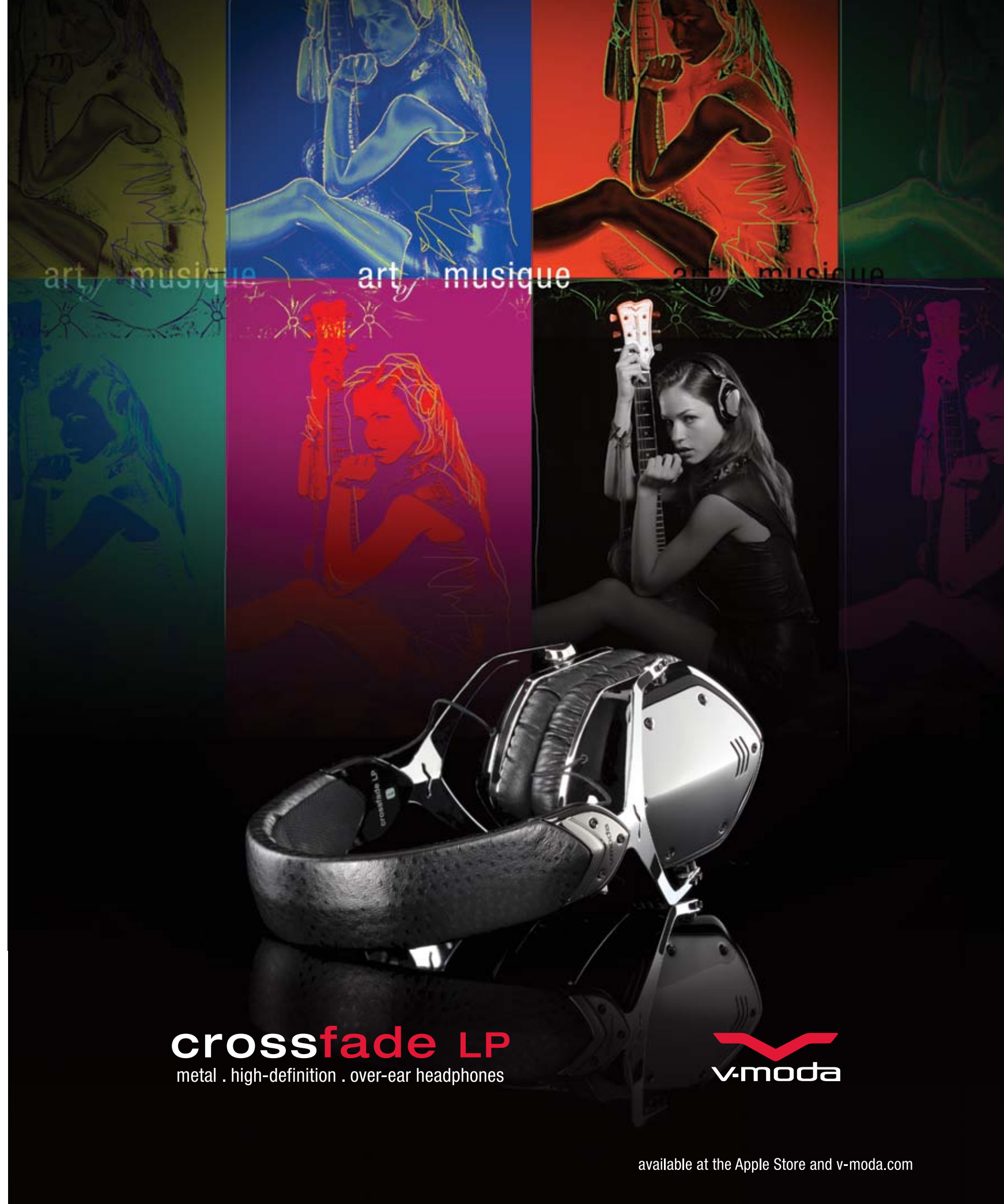
James Blake
CMYK EP (2010)

The London producer's third proper release made him into the poster boy for the more experimental intersections of IDM in the post-dubstep landscape. Thus, while the title track contains samples from Aaliyah and Kelis, it also rides a skittering 140 bpm beat and a crackling layer of sound that recalls Burial. Pieces like the gospel-tinged "Footnotes" sound like thoroughly dissected LA boogie. While not necessarily a dancefloor record, the EP's subtlety and balance is mesmerizing, especially considering Blake's youth.



Model 500
"OFI" b/w "Huesca" (2010)

One of the artists that made R&S so well-regarded in the 1990s recently returned with a new 12". It goes without saying that Juan Atkins is one of techno's undeniable geniuses, and this record brilliantly displays his Motown colors to a new generation. "OFI" is a space-themed piece of standard Detroit elements, and includes a gorgeous, bell-laden breakdown not normally associated with Atkins. "Huesca," on the other hand, sounds like it could be a long-lost Los Hermanos track—lush synths swell behind high-frequency flourishes and D-style skitter. Excellent new work from one of the best.



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FIVE STAR

SASHA GREY

THE PORN STAR/NOISE ARTIST TELLS US ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT GEAR IN HER BAND ATELECINE'S ARSENAL.



Casio SK-1 Sampling Keyboard (MIDI-converted)

We all know about this neat little guy, with its low-res sampling potential, but ours became a mutant weapon! Our friend Pat converted it to be MIDI. It's the shit... fuck software! Between this guy and handmade cassette tape loops, we created the backbone of over a hundred tracks. Not joking! It has a very unique sound when overmodulated. [Our song] "Puget" is all SK-1, MidiVerb, and voice.



Handmade Yangqin Dulcimer

My bandmate Pablo got a kit to build one, but he kinda put it together all crazy-like. It looks like that time Homer Simpson built a BBQ but created post-modern art. It's not easy to tune, so we just do it to some broken chromatic tuning. We use some contact mics—the shittier, the better—and we don't use the hammers... we play it with our fingers.



Sony TC-D5 Portable Recorder

Field-tested, mother-approved. NPR still uses it. If you're going to make field recordings, this is a great reliable way to do it. We used two of these to dub the EP and some of "And Six Dark Hours Pass." We still use it to play back loops (live-to-tape) in the studio.



Alesis MidiVerb Effects Processor (non-rackmount)

We love it for its simplicity and its glitches. Sometimes it does what it wants, so when you want, say, gated reverb, it says "...em, no!" Instead, you get (insert a strange unlisted effect). This was used tons on the first EP and on *A Cassette Tape Culture*.



Scotch Tape and Razorblades

...for making tape loops. We have used old-school loops on almost every track we do. We know it would [be] easy to just cut and paste in Pro Tools, but the sound and manipulation (or lack thereof) is not the same. It's challenging and that's a big part of experimental music... at least to us.

aTelecine's *A Cassette Tape Culture* is out now on Pendu. myspace.com/atelecine



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ELEMENTS

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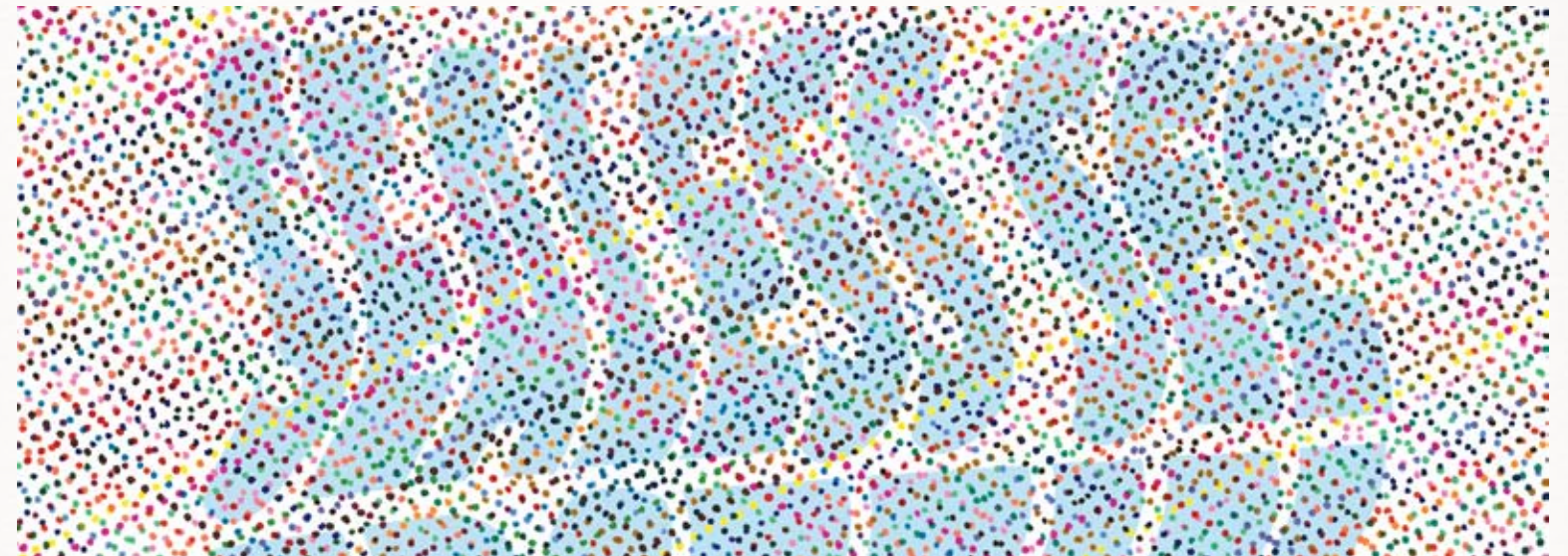
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Compiled by Andrew Porter



JULIANNA BARWICK | THE MAGIC PLACE

FEBRUARY 2011



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CHRIS SCHLARB | PSYCHIC TEMPLE

OUT NOW

AS RAMADANMAN, DAVID KENNEDY MINES
HARDCORE, JUKE, ACID, AND MORE
TO RESHAPE DUBSTEP.

WORDS: WALTER WASACZ PHOTOS: SHAUN BLOODWORTH



BADMAN BEGINS

David Kennedy seems perfectly positioned for the new millennium. His recollection of the 20th century is a bit vague. The future is far away and up for grabs. His professional creative trajectory, which began rather suddenly in the mid-'00s when he stumbled upon a low-pressure sound community growing in London, is all happening in the present.

"I just started hanging out at these parties and becoming exposed to a developing scene like nothing I'd ever experienced before," he says. "I threw myself into it. My mates at school thought I went bonkers. The direction of my life, all my friends, completely shifted due to dubstep."

It shifted so dramatically, in fact, that Kennedy began to disappear behind a moniker called Ramadanman—chosen for how it looks and rolls off the tongue rather than as any personal relationship to Islam—that he'd thought up when he was about 13. That was just after the '90s became the aughts, when he was getting over listening to "pop rubbish" and turning on to something deeper and darker. "I liked how the name sounded then." And we like how it sounds now. It's one of the smartest and most distinctive aliases of any artist at work in the 21st century.

Ramadanman is on Skype, talking from London, telling me about this transfiguration from impressionable club kid to confident and versatile bass producer. The most significant changes seemed to come about when he was preparing to head north to study English and French at Leeds University.

"I wasn't even of legal age when I began going to FWD>> in spring of 2006," he says of the influential weekly that helped put dubstep on the map. "It was grime and garage that held my interest before that. But not like this, which was the new, exciting sound of *right now*. I became insanely passionate about it."

Passion begets passion in any music scene. But the burst of raw energy generated by the forward thinkers and doers of the first wave of dubstep—in London and Bristol primarily, though a number of key players were found in some northern UK regional centers and peppered across the European continent—was a real fire starter.

Around the time Kennedy bounced into the party, DMZ (the label run by Coki, Loefah, and Mala) had been around for a couple of years, Steve Goodman (a.k.a. Kode9) was less than a year into Hyperdub, Burial had not yet been outed, Rob Ellis (a.k.a. Pinch) had launched Tectonic, and Skull Disco was becoming a double-barreled platform for the rapidly ascending Appleblim and Shackleton. Then there was Paul Rose (a.k.a. Scuba), who was building Hotflush Recordings into a crossover power center in London and later Berlin, while

in The Netherlands, Martyn was undergoing a transformation from Dutch D&B promoter to brave-new-world dub producer in American suburbia.

At FWD >>, Kennedy, now 22, met the slightly older Ben Thomson and Kevin McAuley—a.k.a. Ben UFO and Pangaea, respectively—who were also students at Leeds. The trio began putting their passions together and started the Hessle Audio label in 2007. It provided a significant new gateway into dubstep for artists that were still keeping the bass crunch of the music intact, though gradually losing the wobble that had been a signature element of the style.

In its place, the Hessle kids brought to the table a distilled but intuitive reading of soul, funk, and jazz—largely via an apparent love of house and jungle that had been produced a full generation before. There were also traces of techno, especially the dub stylings of Berlin's Basic Channel, and hybrid features that stacked up nicely against freaky Detroit Afrofuturists Moodymann, Theo Parrish, and Omar S.

Kennedy says, for him, the house influence came from frequent visits at age 14 to the Vinyl Junkies record shop in London's Soho. "I listened





"IT'S ALL BEEN A CONSCIOUS ATTEMPT TO NOT CLONE ANY OF MY TUNES."

to a few things, I bought a few things," he says, but when he began to fool around with FruityLoops at 15, it was grime—not house—he tried to make. "But people started saying it sounded to them like dubstep, which I hadn't really heard of before then," Kennedy says. The more he got into his own music as a writer and producer, the more left of center his tracks became, effectively bending and shaping a genre he knew little about into something, well, not quite like anything else.

In 2006, he made some digital tracks that he offered up to DJs, and put out a side called "Response" on a split 10-inch (with Conquest) on the Bare Dubs label. It was also his first year at university. "I was going to school, making music, starting up a record label. It was quite a busy year," he recalls. But it got

even busier in 2007, when Thomson, McAuley, and Kennedy issued Hessle Audio 001, TRG's "Put You Down" b/w "Broken Heart." Both sides were killer, garage-like blues jams that got the attention of DJs and clubbers across the UK and the continent and made their way to discerning ears in North America. Pangaea's three-track EP, *Coiled*, followed later the same year, and Untold's "Kingdom" 12-inch and TRG's originals, with remixes from Martyn and Ramadanman, were released early in 2008.

"Put You Down (Refix)" was the first transmission by Kennedy on Hessle Audio. He didn't do much with it, frankly, except to strip it of most of its gloss and sheen. It was already a tight, lean track, rough around the edges and dancefloor-ready. Ramadanman just made it

edgier, leaner, and, yes, grimmer. But it was his next release that hit the bullseye full-on.

Hearing "Blimey" for the first time was like being shocked to attention by one of those illuminated skeletons that comes out of nowhere and quivers and shakes in the dark. It's all drums and texture, with a subtle bassline that rises and falls, introducing a chorus of kids' voices backed by a barely audible melancholy melody, all engineered for maximum dub impact.

It certainly made an impression on minimal techno star Ricardo Villalobos, who took to opening his typically trippy marathon sets with it. So what did Ramadanman think about that? "I was tremendously flattered, of course. But I have to admit I didn't even know who Villalobos was at the time."



TO ALWAYS BREAK THROUGH TO SOMETHING NEW.

OTHERWISE, IT'S JUST NOT INTERESTING."

In a digitized, instant-information century, where everyone can claim to know anyone via social networks, his comment seems entirely refreshing. So is this: his admission that he needs to catch up with the music of Carl Craig, who re-edited his 2010 collab with Appleblim, "Void 23," on Aus. "He was given the track and did amazing work on it," Kennedy says. "I never met him—except we Tweeted each other after the track was done... He said it was a nice track. I said, 'Cool!' That was about it."

Humility, talent, and ambition seldom align as they appear to with Ramadanman. It's probably a good reason why he's part of a solid team at Hessle Audio, and why he has developed a strong working relationship with Appleblim. "He comes up from Bristol and we just spend hours and hours in the studio," says Kennedy.

"I'm more of a technical producer whereas [Appleblim] just throws something out there and sees what sticks."

In 2009, the pair produced two memorable tracks: "Sous le Sable," a 10-minute tech-house jam included on the Aus EP series and comp *All Night Long*, and the buoyant "Justify," an infectious, shuffling power dub that defies easy categorization. There's a little bit of everything in there—with Berlin and Detroit squeezing out the UK influences by a nose.

Ramadanman has also split production duties with Midland—his housemate—on the funky-house-inspired "Your Words Matter" b/w "More Than You Know," which borrows from Chicago- and New York-style grooves without sounding like either.

His other credits packed into a career now

entering its fifth year are equally impressive. Ramadanman shared a *Dubstep Allstars* mix CD (with Chef) on Tempa that Kennedy calls "a snapshot of where I was at the time [in 2008-09], playing the new stuff, vinyl, and dubplates, along with a few classics."

He released the "Humber" 12-inch on Apple Pips, "Revenue" on 2nd Drop, and remixed "Epilogue" for the French producer F. He's also put out music on Soul Jazz: "Carla" and "Core" b/w "Dayrider" as Ramadanman, and "Gambetta" in his (slightly more) tech-house guise Pearson Sound. As the latter, he's also released "PLSN" b/w "WAD" in 2009 and "Blanked" b/w "Blue Eyes" late last year, both for Hessle Audio.

But 2010 also saw Kennedy quicken the pulse on several Ramadanman productions: the



six-track, self-titled EP on Hesse Audio hints at the shape of new directions to come, especially on "A Couple More Years" and "Don't Change For Me," which mines UK hardcore and jungle and adds more juice and swagger than on previous efforts; the "Glut" b/w "Tempest" sides for Untold's Hemlock imprint, where he inserts cut-up vocal edits and fires up the 808-influenced drum programming even more; and the "Fall Short" b/w "Work Them" EP (Swamp 81), which recombines all his inspirations into an acid-funk-Chicago-juke-B-more-club-groove thang that sounds like no one else working at the moment.

While there is a reductive sonic architecture detectable across his body of work, none of the tracks really sound alike. There is subtle variation in all of them. That's a neat trick that can only come from a rare, unique talent. Is it pure instinct or is the work part of a conscious process?

"I'm never content to do the same thing twice, so my music is always evolving, moving forward," Kennedy says. "It's hard to judge it chronologically from 2006 to this point, but it's all been a conscious attempt to not clone any of my tunes, to always break through to something new. Otherwise, it's just not interesting."

The fact is, Ramadanman, Pearson Sound, and Hesse Audio's product has been far more than interesting. It may be too early to call, but the guess here is that history will offer kind rewards for all of the above projects. From day one, Kennedy and crew have been competitive with the best of their bass music contemporaries, carving out a niche and owning a funky corner of the dubstep sub-world.

Ramadanman has beefed up his tour schedule and is in greater demand for DJ gigs ("I did support for Modeselektor [in late 2010] and it was my first time doing a kinda rock-star thing on a tour bus. Wicked!") and started his own weekly, an all-vinyl night in Leeds called Acetate. He's just finished a *FabricLive* mix to be released in March in Europe and April in the US.

So where does Ramadanman see his life and artistry heading over the next five years?

"I don't think about it, really. I just plan on making music," he says. "Just a few years ago I was going nuts in the club, probably just acting like some totally annoying kid. Now I run a record label, make sure all the tracks are mastered properly, listen to the test pressings, and put them out when they're ready. It's pretty boring stuff, really. It's who I am. I can't see myself in the future any other way."

Ramadanman's *FabricLive* mix will be released in April on Fabric. soundcloud.com/ramadanman

[Hear a few Ramadanman tracks at XLR8R.com/137extras.](#)

WITH NEW ATTENTION PAID TO **SOUTH AFRICAN HOUSE**, WHERE
WILL THE MIASMIC SOUND GO NEXT?

RISE UP



It's a perfect night for prowling, and Johannesburg's well-groomed cats and kittens are congregating in the Newtown region of downtown. A stroke before midnight, people are lining up in a nondescript back alley, while deep crescendos of pulsing drums and congas billow from an open door.



The posters on the wall nearby are clearly not part of your average guerrilla marketing campaign—the club promoters aren't promising some mystical message to be beamed from alternate dimensions. They simply offer original, unadulterated dancefloor drive, drenched in ecstasy, like an uncomplicated, emotive punch.

Inside Le Mix Room, a wonderfully vibrant update on Johannesburg's club scene, a barrage of mesmeric strings occasionally gives way to a light, lofty melody—a cherry on top of a sonic sundae—as resident DJs feed the hungry crowd. For quite some time, Newtown's club culture needed a shot in the arm, and this is it: It's urban and edgy, with a thunderously good soundsystem. Tonight, Le Mix Room is anxiously anticipating South Africa's favorite son, DJ Black Coffee (a.k.a. Nkosinathi Maphumulo), who arrives shortly before 1 a.m., low-key and humble as ever. He grips the beat, segueing from funky and deep to fierce, ancestral Afro-house, toying with the mixer and threatening to blow the bass bins. He takes the EQ by the scruff, boosting and cutting the cresting waves of unfiltered tribal house tunes, the style of which has received its fair share of

DJ BLACK COFFEE



shine internationally, likely propelled by DJ Mujava's "Township Funk" from a few years back. Given the growing worldwide popularity of South African house music, tonight's party might as well be the center of the world.

The South African house scene—and the country in general—can be a complicated place, with varying voices unfurling a grand narrative of intertwined experience. And that's to say nothing of the clubbers here tonight,

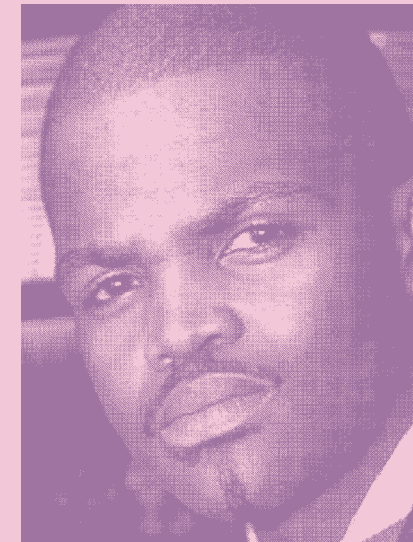
stumbling around with fluorescent paint dabbed all over their faces, while Black Coffee begins to pick up the pace. For all his teasing, Maphumulo elicits cheers as he breaks voluminous bass against the crowded bodies with a tsunami-like force. African drums are the pulse of the club's musical heartbeat; unrelenting and full of fire, they harbor the spirit of the rhythms we've always danced to.

For decades, Africa has been a center for interesting and undulating culture, its people part of a greater 'tribe' that knows, feels, and experiences rhythm on a different and deeper level than almost anywhere else. It is said that all Africans are born with a free spirit, a wild abandon, and an instinctual body response to music. And above that still is the common assertion—one which permeates throughout the continent—that "drums never lie."

"It's the drums that cause heads to turn, man. They *are* the African continent," DJ Cleo (a.k.a. Cleophas Monyepao) tells me as we gaze onto the crowd. "I'm sure it's what Beethoven and all those old duffers would have sounded like if they had discovered hallucinogens and partied in South Africa," he says, cracking up.



DJ CLEO



LV



"IT'S THE DRUMS THAT CAUSE HEADS TO TURN, MAN. THEY ARE THE AFRICAN CONTINENT." — DJ CLEO

"I tend to follow very specific drum-driven patterns when I produce my sound." Of course, it's more than *just* drums. A track like "Nisho Njalo"—which was featured on last year's *Ayobaness! The Sound of South African House*, a survey of the scene's biggest current producers—rides a solid 4/4, and is peppered with differently metered percussion and rhythmic, half-sung, half-chanted, male-female, call-and-response vocals. But one could say that the Motherland's diverse historical background, the African people's intense attachments to regional spoken languages, and widely contrasting environments all help to nurture this rich amalgamation.

"It's hard to put a finger on the distinctive elements," says Gervase Gordon, a South Africa-born member of the London-based trio LV, which incorporates elements of SA house and kwaito into their shuffly, primarily funky house tracks. "I've heard South African house music that sounds like it was from London and vice versa. I guess the thing that really sets South African house apart is those moments when it veers off into the old Township pop styles or kwaito or shangaan music. For [LV] as a group, [traditional] South African music is something we've always had a passing interest in, and I suppose it forms a part of our collective influences." It's that regionalism that plays such a strong role in South African house, the music deriving its distinctive characteristics from the emphasis, tone, and rhythm of the speech, and the country's 11 official languages.

And it's what DJ Cleo uses to set his sounds apart from others: "I like adding vernacular vocals in my sound, be it Zulu or Xhosa," he says. "It adds that familiarity and affinity to the people. That makes the music have some kind of energy that they can relate to. [Without] that, how are they able to distinguish my music from other producers?"

"I've heard [DJ/producer] Boddhi Satva refer to the sound that we make as Ancestral Soul," says Black Coffee, after his brilliant two-hour set. "You may call it house music, but you're only [simplifying it] for everyone. It comes, first and foremost, from Africa, which is undeniable. Africa has its own sound, extremely powerful. Personally, I like to add a sweet and stylish atmosphere to my productions, be it a vocal or a very flowing melody."

House music started to crop up in South Africa in the early '90s, but since then, it's risen to become a popular and very beloved style throughout the country. And as a result, new, forward-thinking interpretations of house's idioms have emerged from the underground. "Currently the house-music market in South Africa has become so big to the point where it has almost nullified other genres. It's house music first, then everything else," says DJ Cleo. "During the '90s, guys like DJ Fresh, Oskido, Christos, and Vinny Da Vinci [a.k.a. DJs at Work] were the only DJs playing house music, putting out compilations of music that we didn't have access to. These guys pretty much set the scene for what we know as house music in South Africa, [giving it] its cultural presence and worldwide notice. They defined it, nursed [it] like a mother would a child."

When kwaito, South African house's slower-tempo precursor, became popular, especially in the township of Soweto near Johannesburg, South African youths were still just singing revolutionary, anti-apartheid songs—really angry, depressing stuff. Groups and artists like Boom Shaka, Bongo Muffin, and Mafikizolo came up with something new, something that would define a post-apartheid generation as it was on the verge of ending. Under the guidance of DJ Oskido's Kalawa Jazmee label, that fresh sound emerged: It was hip, happy, and it made people dance and enjoy



DJ OSKIDO



CULOE DE SONG



"YOU MAY CALL IT HOUSE MUSIC, BUT YOU'RE ONLY SIMPLIFYING IT."

— DJ BLACK COFFEE

themselves. They called it kwaito after the Afrikaans slang word "kwaai," meaning the music was cool. Kwaito was a wild, eclectic brew of language and sound that couldn't have happened anywhere but South Africa. Within its vocal delivery are hints of US hip-hop, but kwaito's lyrics come straight from South Africa's townships, and give a voice to the streets, incorporating lingo from Tsotitaal or Kasitaal, glorious potpourris of all 11 South African official languages. In the late '90s, kwaito really began to intermingle with house, and in 2001, Masters at Work's Louie Vega took interest, and signed Mafikizolo, a group consisting of DJ Oskido (a.k.a. Oscar Mdlongwa) and Bruce Sebitlo, and reworked its track "Lotto" (a.k.a. "Loot") for the international market.

While DJ Cleo might be bringing the sound to the people today, he's quick to credit the groundwork laid by his predecessors: "If DJ Oskido did not insist on experimenting with live instruments including vuvuzelas, adding live basslines, and horn harmonies, South African house would not have gained a distinct sound that the world would sponge from," he says. Oskido was also instrumental in distributing the music, selling tapes of out his car to promote his Kalawa Jazmee label, and essentially building the scene's infrastructure. Years later, "You walk anywhere in South Africa, you hear house music blaring through taxi windows, on a guy's phone or iPod, car radios, pubs and clubs, and naturally radio stations," says Cleo. "South Africans are generally party people; house here just blew up like nobody's business."

DJ Cleo's modern take on house music has all the hallmarks of a kwaito song, and is respected largely because of its distinctive regional qualities, which include languid, rolling basslines and South African vocal chants. "The house music scene in South Africa has evolved dramatically," he says. "You now find DJs and

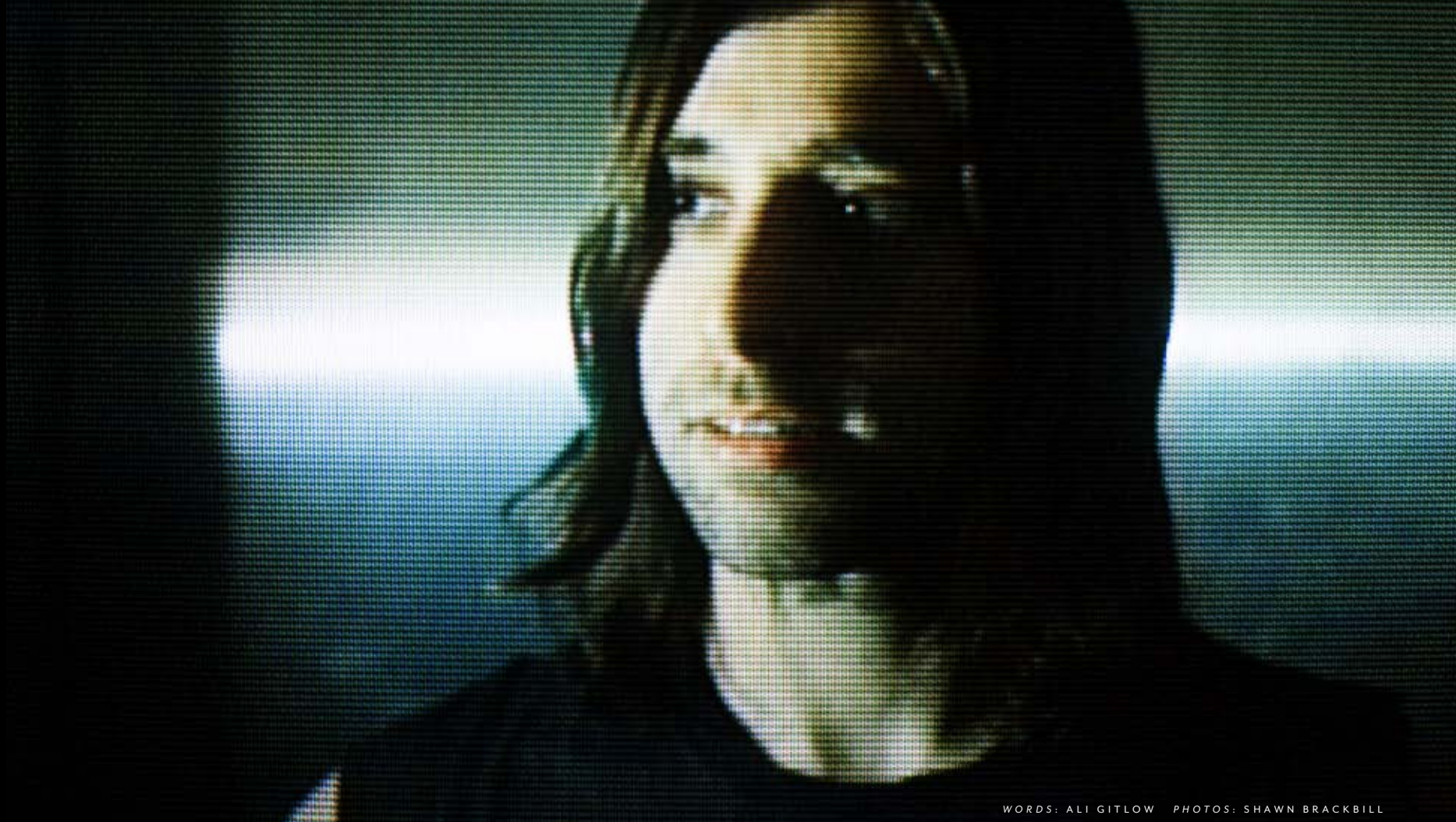
producers who are inspired by a thick, glutinous concoction of funk and jazz, others inspired by a piece of energetic jazz that hides behind a delightful waltz intro and finale, or a fuzzy bassline tickled by keys—all interpreted in an authentic South African way."

Undoubtedly, last year's World Cup shone a lot of light on all things South African, and helped to widen the perception of the culture in general. But what will it take for house music here to continue its current outgrowth? The crop of scene newcomers seems a good place to start. Within the country there's Culoe De Song, a recent signee to London label Innervisions, and folks like LV's Gordon, and Spoek Mathambo, who currently reside in London and Sweden, respectively, but have brought the new vibes with them.

"I don't know if it's that easy to generalize, but I do sometimes hear those tunes that blend a bit of a South African riddim or vibe with something totally else, and that is exciting," says Gordon, whose 2010 hit with LV, "Boomslang," featuring vocalist Okmalumkoolkat, made waves across the UK funky/bass music spectrum. "Mainstream and underground music is getting to the point where they're virtually indistinguishable, and that house pulse is so ridiculously entrenched there. I guess there's something timelessly seductive about it, but it can also be unbelievably boring and restrictive... Aside from the fact that guys like Culoe make wicked tunes, I also think one of the reasons why I like Okmalumkoolkat's group, Dirty Paraffin, so much is that they just have zero respect for people's expectations of what South African music should be; anything's up for grabs."



Check out music from this story at XLR8R.com/137extras.



MIDI

ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER'S DANIEL LOPATIN AND TIGERCITY'S
JOEL FORD GRAB THEIR SYNTHS AND DIG INTO THEIR PAST.

WORDS: ALI GITLOW PHOTOS: SHAWN BRACKBILL



PARTY

Sitting in a cozy living room in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and eating a bag of Haribo Build-A-Burger Gummi Candy, it's clear that 28-year-olds Daniel Lopatin and Joel Ford have been hanging out for a long time:

way before Lopatin began crafting ambient synth tracks as Oneohtrix Point Never, before Ford joined soft rock band Tigercity, and before they combined forces as Games. The guys are at tremendous ease with each other, divulging how they first met in a sixth-grade science class in Wayland, Massachusetts, a town that Ford claims was "totally suburban bubble-fied."

Spending their teenage days listening to drum & bass pioneer Goldie, college radio from nearby Boston, and Lopatin's father's jazz fusion records, they started a band called Polyphonic when they were both 15. Ford played drum pads on an Ensoniq SQ-2 keyboard and Lopatin manned the same trusty Juno-60 synthesizer he still uses. "We played at the talent show at our high school," Lopatin says. "With rappers! And a DJ scratching," Ford adds, chuckling.

"That's really the true origin of Games," Lopatin continues, referring to their current joint endeavor. Moving into a run-down Bushwick apartment together in February 2010 ("We didn't have hot water or heat," Ford describes), they started







producing tracks on a bunch of secondhand synths and sequencers. Thus far, they've released a 7" that features tunes "Everything is Working" and "Heartlands," and most recently put out the cheekily titled *That We Can Play EP* (both on LA-based label Hippos in Tanks).

Taking inspiration from sources as varied as '80s synth pop band The System and DJ Premier mixtapes, the EP is a sample-heavy odyssey that feels like a sunset drive down the Pacific Coast Highway while sipping wine coolers and wearing a diamond-studded leather jacket. They claim it has a conceptual focus in that all of the tracks came to exist via the same process, but, besides that, nothing really ties them together.

"It's almost like we just sit down with gear and are like, 'Whoa, this sounds sweet,' and then we'll make a beat, and be like, 'What if we do this?' and something comes out and we move from there," Ford explains. "Where it gets really complex—and you can't be a slacker—is you have to inventorize all these tiny sounds and constantly be trying to fit all of these moving parts together and see what sticks—and it's a lot of repetitive, careful-listening kind of work," Lopatin further illuminates.

Last summer, while spending a week at Ford's parents' house near Boston, they made "Planet Party," one of the first tracks to end up on the EP. "We were making this smooth-rock, Alan Parsons Project-style shit, and then it completely got sliced and diced, mistakes happened in Pro Tools, and it became something else," Ford confesses. The result is a collection of drum claps, whiny synth melodies, and cut-up samples of '80s-tinged vocal snippets.

An attendant music video, made by Josef Kraska, features low-tech imagery of yachts, long-haired babes, jet skiers, and renderings of cassette tapes, compiled in the same cut-and-paste style in which the song was assembled.

"MIDI Drift" gathers emotive synth and keyboard melodies and floats an unintelligible man's voice on top of them, resulting in a glittering ode to early synth-pop that somehow manages to, at the same time, seem quite contemporary. "Shadows in Bloom" begins mischievously before morphing into a dance-y beat; this track features vocals most shamelessly, putting them up front to great effect. Brooklyn duo Gatekeeper provides a spooky remix of "Strawberry Skies" on the EP as well. "There's a boot-up logo sound from PlayStation 1 in it, which is awesome," Lopatin enthuses.

The opening song, "Strawberry Skies," is a slow-starting, echo-heavy tune that features the vocal talents of fellow Brooklynite producer and singer Laurel Halo (see this month's Bubblin' section for more about her). It's the only track that was recorded and mixed in an actual studio. Halo hits on a perfectly melancholic note, crooning "*Can't find the meaning/In all this midnight scheming*" atop a panoply of vintage flutes and whomping synth melodies. Writing the lyrics together, the guys made up nonsensical phrases in order to plot out the vocal melody. "I made them about Shaq and Kobe and eating steak sandwiches and pies," Ford fondly remembers. "Anything just to get the sounds," Lopatin adds.

One of Games' own remixes also appears on the EP—their take on "It Was Never Meant to Be" by Montreal producer CFCF. They capture his slow, sometimes trippy piano melodies and make them

downright danceable, adding a hard-hitting 4/4 and, of course, upping the severity of the synthesizers. To craft this and other remixes they've done, they choose one inspiring element to highlight, and heavily doctor the rest. "Preserve minimal amounts of original track; create whole world underneath," Ford asserts.

Listen to Games, and then check out Lopatin's Oneohtrix Point Never project or Tigercity, Ford's straight-up rock band, and the wide ranges of the guys' personal styles and tastes become apparent. For Lopatin, this connection makes a bit more sense: He's used to creating electronic soundscapes, albeit less dance-inducing, and far less upbeat. "I play differently when I'm playing with Joel," he admits. "So, it's both a comfortable integration of stuff that I do, but also quite different, just because I'm playing off of whatever situation I'm in." Ford doesn't see Games relating to his work with Tigercity on a sonic level, though he notes that it has expanded his knowledge of keyboards, as well as "learning how to write and craft songs, and move ideas around and combine them into something else."

One musical belief they share is that everything is just too damn fast these days. A definite part of the current zeitgeist wherein artists like Salem, oOoOO, and How to Dress Well are taking after Houston innovator DJ Screw to slow things down, the Games boys see benefits in a more patient sort of listening. "Music is a repose, a break from the speed of everything," Lopatin waxes. "The same way people work out in gyms and build up certain areas of their body or focus on their musculature, it's good practice to listen slowly. That's what we're trying to figure out now... how do we build a really epic 10- to 15- to 20-minute

track that is engaging and feels hypnotic and feels like pop music without limiting it to this short-form thing."

Another thing they're trying to figure out is what a Games live show should look like. They've performed together a few times so far, but envision a more large-scale, immersive experience, drawing on the spirit of performers like Monolake, Orbital, and The Black Dog to create an ambient techno world. "It's going to surprise people, and it's not necessarily as beat-oriented or as funky as the stuff we've put out," Lopatin explains. "It's kind of like Jackson's Computer Band or Max Tundra, a sampler-heavy approach to ambient music."

"...But, for the purpose of main-stage Glastonbury—20,000 people," Ford adds, before they both break out into laughter.

They are also in the process of starting a label, in an effort to shirk the usual cycle propagated by most labels of cutting records followed by heavy touring ("We came to the conclusion that we're producers, and we want a lot of control," Lopatin affirms). They're also beginning work on the group's first full-length, and feel their longstanding friendship will make this process a hell of a lot simpler. "There's an ease of production in the sense that we speak the same language," says Ford. "Collaboration is basically just us hanging out."

"It feels like our whole high school and college years were just research for this moment," adds Lopatin, "and we can finally actualize all of this research. It's really fun."

[*Ed's Note: At press time, the members of Games announced that their name was under legal dispute, and may have to be changed in the future.*]

Games' *That We Can Play EP* is out now on Hippos in Tanks. myspace.com/gamesmusic



BOOK OF MATTHEW

LA-BASED CASSINGLE DIGGER **MATTHEW DAVID**
MIXES LOW END THEORY AND TAPEOP AESTHETICS
TO TURN THE BEAT AROUND.



To his peers in the LA
beat scene, Matthew
"Matthewdavid"
McQueen is an
innovator—

a man whose crackling, dreamlike compositions, full of tape hiss and half-heard ambient tones, inspired some of the most mind-blowing moments on Flying Lotus' game-changing *Los Angeles*.

But he's also a guy who loves Bell Biv DeVoe.

Today, I'm with him in the living room of the cozy two-bedroom house he shares with his girlfriend, artist Jesselisa Moretti. "This is tools of the trade, right here," he says, breaking out a box of old cassettes in cardboard sleeves. "Whenever I play out as a DJ, I like playing all these old tapes that I'm digitizing from the late '80s, early '90s. Girls love it. It's just really fun."

Moretti, who designs all the packaging for the couple's D.I.Y. label, Leaving Records, recalls a recent night he DJed at Low End Theory. "You played one of those sets, and I swear to God, girls just materialized, like out of nowhere."

"I have a lot of fun with my mixes," McQueen agrees with a shy, almost sheepish grin. "I spend too much time on my mixes."

On one such mix, a recent *XLR8R* podcast, those old R&B cassettes figured prominently. Sprinkled amidst the 26-year-old producer's trademark lo-fi electronics and bong-hit beats are snippets of everything from Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" to Cameo's "Honey"—not played at full speed to please the ladies, but slowed down, filtered, and distorted, like ancient radio transmissions coming through on a broken boom box. The effect is at once creepy and nostalgic—two qualities that tend to fight it out in Matthewdavid's original compositions, too.

Cassettes also play a role on those original tracks—not old Jodeci and TLC cassettes, typically, but the field recordings McQueen makes with his trusty Sony TCM cassette recorder, a cousin of the now-discontinued Walkman series. "It's like my secret weapon," he says. "The motor noise can be really loud when you're using the internal mic, so I hook up an external mic to it." The TCM, along with a handful of other tape recorders he's picked up over the years, travels with him everywhere, from Big Sur to Joshua Tree—although he's made some of his favorite field recordings right in his front yard, which occupies a terraced hillside high above the winding streets of Los Angeles' Mount Washington neighborhood. In his home studio, overlooking that yard, McQueen has just



"ARTISTICALLY, I'VE JUST REACHED OUT INTO ANOTHER FORM WHERE I'M TRYING TO UNDERSTAND MYSELF AND MY EXISTENCE."

put the finishing touches on his first album for Flying Lotus's Brainfeeder label, due the first quarter of this year. He's just decided on its title, *Outmind*, a made-up word he feels is universal. "Since being in Los Angeles, I've grown so much," he marvels. "Artistically, I've just reached out into another form where I'm trying to understand myself and my existence. And that's all because of being in LA and meeting Lotus, and being involved with dublab," the experimental radio collective through which McQueen met Flying Lotus' Steve Ellison and some of the artists he's released on Leaving Records.

McQueen moved to LA in 2006; he'd never set foot there before, but immediately it felt like home. "I just knew what was happening out here. All my favorite labels, all my favorite music was happening out here: Stones Throw, Mush, Plug Research, Anticon, the whole underground hip-hop thing." As a young rapper/producer growing up in the Florida Panhandle, McQueen naturally gravitated towards the West Coast's experimental artists and labels, although his influences also range as far afield as Rawkus Records, Slum Village, Ninja Tune, chopped-and-screwed southern rap, and even leftfield sound collage artists like The Books, who inspired some of his earliest forays into tape manipulation and field recordings.

"My first record—this digital record I did for Plug Research—there's a lot of Books influence on there," he notes. "And it was stuff I was finding in weird Southern Baptist thrift stores in Florida—just strange home recordings that I was finding and putting in my music."

These days, even when he's working at home on 303s and Ableton Live, he's just as likely to prop his Sony TCM recorder up against his favorite amp, record his own playback, then rip that back onto his laptop. The amp "has a really nice, warm sound" he can't get from purely digital sources. "I think it grounds me," he says of his continued reliance on analog recording techniques. "The whole thesis here is a tasteful distance or separation from technology."

Not that he's a technophobe—far from it. Giving a brief tour of the bedroom that doubles as his home studio, he proudly points out his growing collection of unusual acoustic instruments, including an Autoharp and a "banjo-mandolin thing" in need of new strings. But his most prized possession, though decidedly

retro, is a gearhead's dream. "This thing... we go back," he says, sliding a bulky, purple E-mu MP-7 Command Station out of its black padded case. "In college, freshman year, my dad got me this. I saw this ad in *The Source* magazine with the RZA on a subway holding it like, 'This is the one.'" [He imitates the Wu-Tang leader's pose from that long-lost ad, cocking the Command Station under one arm and pointing b-boy-like at its dense grid of knobs and buttons.] "It's a synth-sequencer. This was my first outboard piece of gear. It's got some really cool, cool, cool sounds on it—arpeggio and stuff. I still use it."

So the hip-hop influences are still very much a part of Matthewdavid's music. But they're just one crayon in the box. "I never want to nail myself down to a particular genre or influence," he says, pointing out that his Brainfeeder debut also includes traces of folk, Low End Theory bass music, and the early '90s pop and R&B of his beloved cassettes collection. There are even vocals—and not just sampled, distorted, buried-in-the-mix vocals (although there are plenty of those, too). "There's one [vocal] that I'm the most nervous about that's really in the foreground, for the first time ever," he says. "There's a lot [of] choral harmony things that I do, harmonizing over myself... I'm understanding pop structure, composition, pop arrangements now." No one would mistake the woozy new tracks for Bell Biv DeVoe, but he's not lying when he describes the Brainfeeder material as "more accessible" than his previous efforts.

Still, the moments nearest and dearest to him are those magical ones caught on tape. On the new album, one in particular stands out, recorded on a beach in Big Sur with Moretti. "I had a cymbal and my little tape recorder, and we're chanting in this weird, funny, tribal, wave-crashing beach chant. It came out really cool."

"That's why I make a lot of ambient music," Matthewdavid says, sipping tea on his couch while a rare Los Angeles rainfall patters softly on the roof. "That's my folk music. It's my easiest form of expression."

Outmind is out soon on Brainfeeder. myspace.com/matthewdavid



Hear Matthewdavid's *XLR8R* podcast at XLR8R.com/137extras.

THE
EMERALD
FOREST



WITH HIS THIRD LP, **LONE** TAKES A 180 AND VENTURES INTO THE DEEP END OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC'S PAST.

WORDS: PATRIC FALLON PHOTOS: SHAUN BLOODWORTH

Lone has been the nom de tune of Matthew Cutler for about three years now, when he set off on an ambitious path that would see him release an album a year of R&B-kissed beat music. His first pair of critically acclaimed records, *Lemurian* and *Ecstasy & Friends*, bore song titles like "Sungrazer Cascade" and "Lens Flare Lagoon," and featured blunted hip-hop beats, smooth basslines, and voices of stoned slacker chicks intertwined with Boards of Canada-esque analog haze. On his latest LP, *Emerald Fantasy Tracks*, that's all changed.



"The way I see it, I'm only just starting out, really," Cutler explains, on the line from his home in Nottingham, England. Lately, Cutler has reignited his fascination with the early days of rave, house, and techno, and he used that newfound love to craft the next phase of Lone. "In terms of the big picture, I want to try as many styles as possible. And I've always been into the whole old-school rave stuff in England. I just felt like doing something different."

Cutler remains a thorough lover of hip-hop, but it's influences like Black Dog, Plaid, classic Detroit techno, and old-school jungle/hardcore producers Manix and Altern-8 that feature most prominently on the new album, a set of more or less straight-up club tunes. While his earlier records aligned him more with LA's beat scene, the new tracks take a slicker, quicker approach, often built around a solid four-on-the-floor. Last year's "Pineapple Crush" b/w "Angel Brain" 12" became the inaugural release for Cutler's own Magic Wire imprint. "I just

started the label because I had a bit of downtime waiting for music to come out that I had signed to labels," says Cutler. "I thought, 'Maybe, if I start a label, I can get [my music] out straightaway.'"

But the label, and its music, proved to be more than just a way to pass time; critics and fans became enamored with the new Lone and his UK-rave-infused sound. "It's worked [out] better [than I expected], actually," says Cutler of Magic Wire's first offering. "I didn't expect anyone to buy it, but they did in the end. Because that went well, and because I'm into this style, I'm really interested in pushing the label in that way—making club music." To underscore Cutler's appeal, Kode9 even kicked off his *DJ-KiCKS* mix with "Once in a While," another Lone track from the same time, which arrived late last year on Werk Discs.

After releasing those initial singles, Cutler was eager to grow into his fresh aesthetic, so he set out to make the next Lone album. The eight-song *Emerald Fantasy Tracks* came out in

November, just four months after "Pineapple Crush" debuted, and effectively solidified Lone's transformation into an avid patron of the dancefloor. But despite its 40-minute runtime, Cutler still considers his latest a mini-album. "It's not really what I would do with a full-length album," he says. "It's more like an extended EP, I suppose. [The songs] work together in some way, but it's not the sort of way I'd generally like an album to work. But that might be the theme in and of itself: the fact that it's just covering all the different styles of my favorite house and techno."

One full listen of *Emerald Fantasy Tracks* proves his point. Songs with invigorating, DJ-friendly rhythms, like the red-hot "Re-Schooling" and "Moon Beam Harp," mesh with the more low-slung, day-dreamy sounds of "Ultramarine," the glassy swirl of "Petrcane Beach," and foggy, somber closer "The Birds Don't Fly This High." No matter the tempo or vibe, that wavering

transistor-radio style of melodies and textures—sounds that have always helped define Lone—still radiate from within each song's vibrant core. "Whatever style I decide to work in, melody is the most important thing to me. That's the thing that will draw together everything I do." And it's true—from the onset of *Emerald Fantasy Tracks*, lovers of Cutler's earlier records will immediately find a familiar home in the music's warm atmosphere and soulful themes.

Now, even with a newly minted record label and a substantial series of dazzling club tunes, the busy Cutler simply won't stay still. "I've been talking to a couple labels, and I think I may do another EP of more of the same sort of stuff," he speculates. "I think after that, that's usually the amount of time [it takes me to] get bored with [a style], so I might even end up switching to something else by then." Hardly surprising. Lone is an artist with tenacity and vision—a kind of soul and work ethic that belies his era—and

the ability to spread his talents over an array of projects without wearing thin. Lone sees both the forest and the trees. Cutler isn't bored, per se; he's just bent on creating a fully formed musical identity—not to mention delivering your next favorite tune.

"Aphex Twin has always been a huge influence to me, and if you look back on his career, he's pretty much tried everything, in terms of different styles of techno and ambient music," Cutler starts. He likens the shape-shifting nature of Lone to the iconic artist, and in some ways, it's not a stretch. "My stuff is inspired by the way he did it, really, trying as many different styles as possible. And it always sounds like him—that's the thing. That's something I hope comes across in my music."

Emerald Fantasy Tracks is out now on Magic Wire. magicwirerecordings.com

GO
Hear "Pineapple Crush" and more at XLR8R.com/137extras.



INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY TO NOWHERE

THE DUTCH-BORN **RAFAEL ROZENDAL** MAKES THOUGHT-

PROVOKING WEBSITES WITH NO PARTICULAR PLACE TO GO.

WORDS: SU WU

With his disarmingly stark websites, Rafaël Rozendaal has created exactly what Hollywood mogul Samuel Goldwyn once famously said was the mark of artistic genius: new, original clichés. For those who grew up with cartoons, animated GIFs, and a certain online color palette, the work of the 31-year-old Amsterdam native will look exactly as you remembered, except that you've never seen it before.



Poignant in their simplicity, Rozendaal's singular websites—start with [hotdoom.com](#) and see what magical place it takes you to—and drawings manage to encapsulate even the most expansive moments: a pebble next to a bottomless hole, an endlessly exploding volcano, a road to nowhere. "Art is more useful than you think," says Rozendaal, the great-grandson of a former Brazilian president, who now "lives and works in hotels." But making art, he says, is a duty, a pain, a 24/7 job in which there are no restful moments: "Even dreaming is work," he claims. Here we talk to him about infinity, the desire to be understood, and what it means to own a web domain.

XLR8R: A lot of your work seems to be about endlessness: an endless mountain range or a deep black hole or [thepersistenceofsadness.com](#). But this infinity runs up against the limits of attention, of the time the viewer is willing or has to spend. Does anything last forever?

Rafaël Rozendaal: Our perception of time is very primitive. I expect some major discoveries very soon. There is no "now," by definition—we are too slow to witness it. Everything we observe has already happened. I believe that once we realize that time is not an absolute force, our lives will change drastically. All our concepts will be wiped out and rebuilt from the ground up. Imagine manipulating time as you desire. We will have to rethink our purpose in life. The consequences will be so severe that it is impossible for me to really tell you what life will be like. Without time limits,

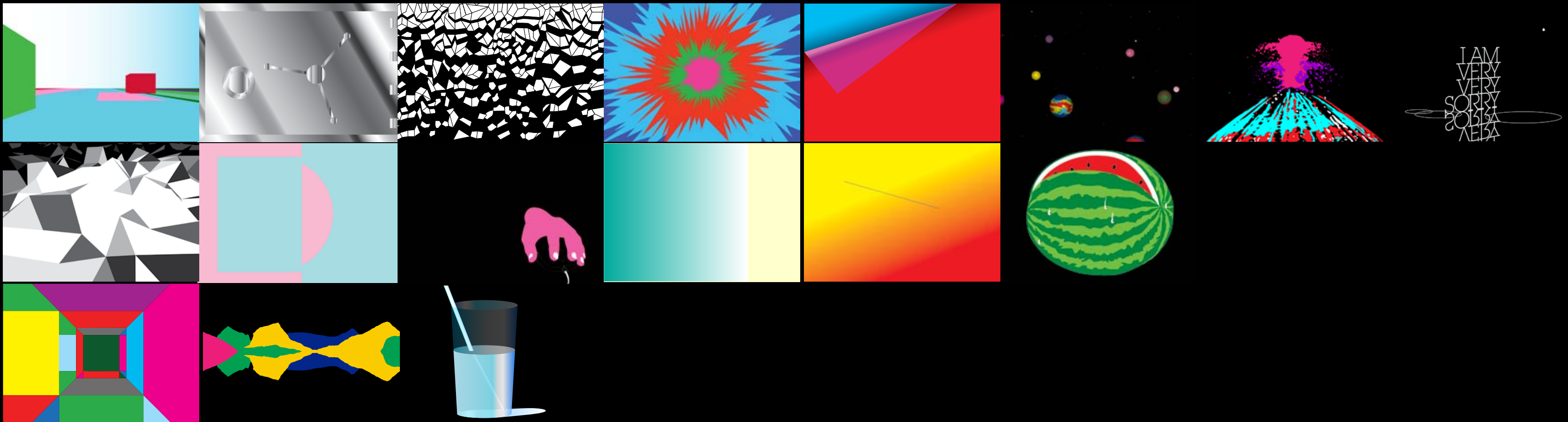
there is no scarcity and no one will ever be busy. The idea of work, necessity... all gone. Boredom would be the new frontier. Imagine having no obligations, and having millions of years in front of you. I avoid making images that have a beginning or an end. I like the idea that time is frozen but everything stays in motion. Images behaving like waterfalls, always moving but never towards a destination.

Your work requires action from the viewer, in addition to the act of viewing, and I'm curious whether you think the internet—and your web-based work—creates a sense of the surety of consequence, that we click and something happens right away, and it's the only thing that can happen. Is interactivity a demand?

Somewhere in the 1400s in France, a church was built. The stained glass windows were colored with

"I BELIEVE THAT ONCE WE REALIZE THAT TIME IS NOT AN ABSOLUTE FORCE,

OUR LIVES WILL CHANGE DRASTICALLY."



a new pigment that was bluer than anything anyone had ever seen. The church was finished and the visitors looked up and saw this incredible light. They were convinced they were looking at heaven. Not a picture of heaven—they were convinced they saw heaven itself. One of the strangest things in our time is the use of the word "virtual." For centuries we have known drawing, painting, writing, all of them are very virtual. Money is virtual. Phone calls are virtual. But now that the screen is interactive, people call it virtual. Visual interactivity has been thoroughly explored in videogames. Mario starts running when you press a button, and he runs faster when you hold two buttons. But videogames are always goal-oriented. Interactivity is usually a means to an end. What if it is a destination? As children, we are taught not to touch things, even if we instinctively want to. When we look into the world, we are not distant observers—we are involved. I am interested in this area of perception, looking into the world, using our eyes as well as our hands.

What would you be doing if the internet didn't exist? Or, what can you do only because the internet exists? There's something lovely about medium-specific work or era-specific work—that it

has to be exactly as it is, that it captures the time in which it was made, and so forth—but what changes and what doesn't change?

It is hard to imagine living without the world wide web. The true power of the internet is the lack of authority. You can start a magazine or a TV channel in a second. My ideas seem quite silly and insignificant when I start making them. The internet is the perfect place for things that seem irrelevant. There is no editor, curator, or gallerist telling me what to do and how to do it. I can imagine that in a world without internet, I would be forced to make things that make more sense. But irrational and intuitive work has existed before the internet, so who knows? Maybe I would have found a way to do that even without the world wide web. I want it to be clear that I am eternally grateful to be living in this time, doing what I want to do every day and sharing my work instantly with everyone.

What tools do you use to make your work?

I've been drawing all my life; first with pencil, later with ink. I never really liked to paint, although I love paintings. I liked photographing a bit, but photography doesn't really connect with my perception. At some point the computer came along and I played around with drawing

programs, getting to know the mouse... I did not start seeing the computer as an artistic tool until I discovered vector softwares. Vectors are mathematical shapes: not made of pixels, but of points and curves. Once I got into it, it felt like being weightless. Copy, move, drag, change color, warp, adjust, scale, duplicate, moving perfect shapes in an infinite space. There is nothing like it. I always enjoyed mathematics, and vector software makes you feel like you're in a mathematical world. There is nothing on earth that is mathematically perfect, and even if perfect objects existed, our eyes are too imperfect to see them. But spending time using vectors makes you feel like you're maneuvering in this ideal conceptual world where squares are really square and circles are really round—a world without noise or distraction.

Going back to the topic of specificity, many of your drawings and websites are abstracted, with the minimum of cultural markers. Is there some sort of admission in the idea of a universal language that we want to be understood?

I've always been interested in abstract paintings. All his life, Mondrian wanted to find a universal visual language. In some ways he did, but in some ways he perfected a very particular style

that reminds us of a specific period, and of a specific culture. Mondrian's paintings will always remind us of art more than anything else. I've always been interested in animated cartoons. Early cartoon characters had to be very simple because each drawing was done by hand. A seven-minute cartoon requires a minimum of 10,000 drawings, so you'd better get to the point. The limitations of cartoons created a very specific language based on exaggeration, simplification and abstraction. It spread around the world fast and is now recognizable to anyone. It is universal. The art world is full of inside jokes and historical references. Sometimes that's great, but very often it excludes people. I do not want to exclude anyone. I want to make work that draws people in and makes them feel welcome. A good artist is a magnifying glass, guiding sunlight into a focal point. If the artist does his or her job well, the focal point is sharp enough to start a fire.


Sometimes I think that this drive to be functional and contribute to society and be useful is what makes people miserable, and I mean no offense at all when I say that this is what I love about your work—that, like all great art, it doesn't have a point. Why make art?

Making art is not very enjoyable to me. The process is quite painful. It is an obsession and a duty, but is also wonderful. I think my identity is so connected to my work that if I do not work, I feel empty. It sounds negative, but at the same time I am really grateful every day that I get to do

what I want. Art is more useful than you think. Artists were around before lawyers, bankers, professors, mailmen, all the "useful" professions. It also depends on your definition of art. If you include film, literature, music, it is clear that no one wants to live without art. What makes people miserable is stress, which comes from spending more than they can afford. People should stop shopping so they can afford to work less and relax, and leave the hard working to artists. Art is a 24/7 job, every moment is an opportunity, day or night, awake or asleep. Even dreaming is work because the best ideas might come from your subconscious.


Collectors can buy your domain names and your work, and it remains publicly accessible. What does it mean to "own" a web-based work, to own a Rafaël Rozendaal piece?

At first it might seem strange: Why would you buy something that is available for free? We live in an age of sharing, and everything gets passed around all the time. In this ocean of digital content, nothing has value, except domain names. The old way of collecting is based on keeping a piece of art locked in your house, so you have exclusive access. To collect a website, is the opposite. You own it, and the more people see the work, the cooler it is. People who own a domain name know this special feeling: It is your property, even if anyone can walk in—especially because everyone walks in.




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Album Reviews

Egyptrixx

Bible Eyes

Night Slugs

V/A

Night Slugs Allstars Volume 1

Night Slugs




the parallel light
evans

LP, DRONE, ITUNES

12.28.10



the chain
a shoreline dream

SINGLE, NIGHT MUSIC, ITUNES

01.25.10

LATENIGHT WEEKNIGHT RECORDS
ashorelinedream.com theparallellight.com latenightweeknight.com



THE NEWLY MINTED UK IMPRINT CAPS AN IMPRESSIVE START WITH ITS FIRST COMPILATION AND ARTIST ALBUM.

For a label that's only been around for a year, Night Slugs already feels like a proud institution of London-centric dance music. Not content with being London's rave kingpins, the collective headed up by Bok Bok and L-Vis 1990 made its own entire scene. Taking the splintered ends of dubstep, bassline, and UK funky, they soldered the frayed wires together for a powerful charge that revived the corpse of early grime. Mated with the spirit of classic '80s and '90s house, Night Slugs was born. The label's sound is ineffable but remarkably consistent, its releases bolstered with the low-end of dubstep, spoken in gruff, dry grime tones, and touched with a hint of friendly and rambunctious exuberance. Its roster spans two continents and each member of the stable has his own unique sound, yet each remains loosely tied together by a joint commitment to springy textures and exaggerated neon melodies.

Allstars Volume 1 is the label's first CD release and it's appropriately monumental, featuring a smattering of past tracks, remixes, and new originals. It's a breathlessly exciting listen as ingenious rhythms whiz by each other in smooth and fluid motions. The previously unreleased Bok Bok remix of Girl Unit's hyper-dramatic banger, "I.R.L.," lurches with a muscular eski screwface that drains the quirky track of its color, while the label's nascent classics are also out in full force. There's the fussy, grime-streaked funky of Lil Silva's "Golds to Get"; Kingdom's throbbing jock jam, "Bust Broke"; the sleazy, sexed-up boogie of Velour's "Booty Slammer"; and some smug decadence with Girl Unit's Southern hip-hop dubstep anthem, "Wut," which closes the album.

The new originals paint a future as bright as the past: L-Vis 1990 teams up with Deep Teknologi's T. Williams for a piece of cartoon dread with pistons for kicks on "Stand Up," while Bok Bok & Cubic Zirconia unleash an unhealthy amount of handclaps for the storming fidget

house of "Reclash (Dub)." Night Slugs rookies provide exciting new directions for the label, as Optimum's "Broken Embrace" glides with liquid tech-house grace and Jacques Greene's "(Baby I Don't Know) What You Want" takes inspiration from classic house and smoulders with an intense, midnight-blue R&B flame. But it's Toronto native Egyptrixx who provides the compilation's most assured and idiosyncratic moment with "Liberation Front." Synths roll up and down like marbles in a halfpipe, leaving behind trails of dissolute low frequencies that lend it an oddly bottom-heavy quality. The song serves as a convenient manifesto for one of Night Slugs' most unique producers, whose quirky beats perfectly embody the label's ethos.

As such, it's rather prescient that Night Slugs has also chosen Egyptrixx (a.k.a. David Psutka) for the label's first proper artist album, his debut *Bible Eyes*. It's a full-length extension of "Liberation Front," all weighty house grooves and pseudo-tribal drums, with woozy synths coursing through its winding veins. Sometimes he tinkers with the template ("Barely") and occasionally he just shatters it completely and mirthfully toys with the remnants. For instance, the tremulous ballad, "Chrysalis Records," submerges a stoned vocal from fellow Canadians Trust and slinky triplets in a sea of thick cough syrup, while "Naples" glows with tender, pulsing electro nostalgia. His refinement is equally exciting, as the percussive bouquet on "Recital (A Version)" and the restless see-saw of "Bible Eyes" provide dependable grooves to weird out any rave. Credit Egyptrixx for making a debut album that sounds at once so unified and whole, yet like absolutely nothing else. It's fitting that he's on Night Slugs, a label that only believes in taking from the past what it can mercilessly mutate and transform for its own brilliantly idiosyncratic use. *Andrew Ryce*

BEANS

END IT ALL

Anticon

Beans, the least fluid voice of Anti-Pop Consortium, has used his solo career to continue exploring his love for skewed rhyme patterns. His is a thinking-man's approach to vocal acrobatics, one that works best weaving through equally innovative beats, which Beans provided himself on past solo efforts. For his latest album, *End it All*, Beans has relinquished control over the beatmaking and has instead enlisted a group of marquee producers—including Four Tet, In Flagranti, Clark, and many others—to provide the music for his raps. But despite the generally solid instrumentals and creative lyricism available, those two elements rarely mesh well.

At the beginning of "Electric Birth," produced by Interpol's Sam Fogarino, Beans says, "*Sam, we good? It's good, right?*" It implies the two worked together in a studio, but as the track continues, the voice and music sound less and less interrelated. Truth is, we never hear Fogarino respond. Whether or not Beans is actually talking to Sam isn't too important because, regardless, it doesn't *feel* like they made "Birth" together, and that feeling plagues the album.

End it All amounts to a meager 33 minutes, but it does retain a few moments of superior, forward-thinking hip-hop. The booming polyrhythms of the Tortoise-produced "Electric Eliminator" and Tobacco's bubbling analog fuzz on "Glass Coffins" both make ideal homes for the MC. Still, more often than not, Beans comes off like an intrusive guest on his own record. *Patric Fallon*

DIGITAL MYSTIKZ

URBAN ETHICS

DMZ

Mala and Coki, better known as Digital Mystikz, are dubstep OGs. Considering how much that word and that scene have gone through since DM's first release in 2004, it's surprising that their music still hits as hard as it does. Their sound could be a textbook definition of the genre, yet it's hard to call it conservative—even if they're still using the same terrifying dentist-drill synth sound.

Earlier this year, Mala released some solo productions as *Return II Space*, a three-LP set, under the Digital Mystikz name. With *Urban Ethics*, it's Coki's turn to offer previously unavailable tracks on high-quality vinyl. Its relevance is hard to locate at first—Coki's sound is more aggressive and less atmospheric than Mala's—but listening through its gloom, it's easy to discern a master at work. Not without its pro-forma tracks (the

MIDI melodic lines and fanfare that punctuate "Old Hope" and "Serious" are wimpy, like Augustus Pablo rendered as videogame music), *Urban Ethics* still manages to wreck things with fan favorites like "Intergalactic" and "Robotnik."

It's difficult to describe how orthodox dubstep can still sound good, especially when the classic rave and R&B sounds of the '90s have now become the focus of the genre's affections. Building on a style too old to be surprising and too new to be nostalgic, *Urban Ethics* is not a record with the potential to appeal to a general audience. Mala's *Return II Space* is clearly the moody one for dubstep aesthetes; *Urban Ethics* is more precise and functional. If you need this, it's likely you already ordered a copy. For everyone else, *Urban Ethics* says that dubstep is alive and well, and that the world is still probably going to end soon. *Brandon Bussolini*

ISOLÉE

WELL SPENT YOUTH

Pampa

Nearly six years after the unlikely crossover success of his last record for the Playhouse label, *We Are Monster*, Rajko Müller's third album as Isolée arrives on DJ Koze's Pampa Records. "Paloma Triste" opens the album with layers of synths that would sound wistful if they weren't mixed to sound almost unrelated. So far, so good, but it takes an intrusive, out-of-tune bassline—so fumbly it might have been recorded directly from a teenager's practice amp—for the listener to be sure they're in the right place. Rug-pulling moments like this remain a big part of Isolée's sound on *Well Spent Youth*, but they also underscore a serious lack of memorable tunes.



It's not that the new record pales in comparison to *We Are Monster*. Technically, *Well Spent Youth* is the equal of almost anything Isolée has done in the past, with the exception of standout *Monster* cut "Schrapnell." That album struck a nerve because it made a point of sounding different and drew attention to Müller's efforts to play with the conventions of house music. For rock listeners with internet connections, this idiosyncrasy offered a nice introduction to a music culture where albums weren't the benchmark. In retrospect, perhaps *Monster's* reputation seems inflated.

Six years is a long time in the world of 12"s and even longer in web time, but the reasons that *Well Spent Youth* fails to make a lasting impression have nothing to do with sounding dated. As associated as he is with the genre blip of microhouse, Isolée still sounds fresh, with the exception of the obligatory bad vocal track "Transmission." While the album plays, it's easy to hear *Youth's* appeal, but there isn't much to take away once it's over. *Brandon Bussolini*

NICOLAS JAAR

SPACE IS ONLY NOISE

Circus Company

The past few years have seen an explosion of techno's sonic boundaries, with more leftfield and jazz influences creeping into a world more known for its sweaty, four-to-the-floor workouts. Perhaps no other group has been more responsible for this sea change than dOP, the Parisian trio that has brought organic textures, live instrumentation, and a playful irreverence to the post-minimal landscape. Joining the group on the Circus Company label for his first solo full-length, Nicolas Jaar appears to be following in its sonic footsteps.

Though the 20-year-old wunderkind has previously produced genuine tech-house tracks, most notably on Brooklyn's Wolf + Lamb imprint, this album is more of an exercise in atmospherics than surefire club hits. Sure, "Too Many Kids in the Dust" has a nice dub-techno feel, and "Balance Her in Between Your Eyes" could fit in with LA's nascent beat scene, but much of *Space Is Only Noise* betrays an appreciation of sonics beyond the dancefloor. The title track could almost fit onto a Legendary Pink Dots record, and "Keep Me There" has echoes of African jazz and pop music. Even Ennio Morricone and Angelo Badalamenti are referenced on pieces like "Variations" and "Almost Fell," what with the former's twanged guitar and the latter's disembodied female vocals riding above cool, watery synths.

There is only one misstep on this otherwise perfect record, and that is "I Got a Woman." Yes, Jaar is young, so mistakes are excusable, but sampling the vocal line from Ray Charles' most

famous song is a bit much. Otherwise, though, *Space Is Only Noise* might be one of the most ear-opening techno records in recent memory. *Thomas Rees*

RAINBOW ARABIA

BOYS AND DIAMONDS

Kompakt

One could trace Rainbow Arabia's multifarious aesthetic to several origins, whether dancehall, '80s synth-pop, African highlife, Arabic disco, or any number of other realms, depending on the song snippet in question. In any case, the band's first full-length, *Boys and Diamonds*, renders discussions of genre pretty pointless—more than anything, it's a pop album, and a solid one at that.

Boys and Diamonds, coming on the heels of the Los Angeles-based husband-and-wife duo's two earlier EPs, features both cosmic, wayward jams and finely tuned pop tracks, some of which sound like guaranteed dancefloor fillers right out of the box. "Without You" and "Mechanical" are the most immediately infectious cuts, deploying huge melodies and infectious drum patterns with lean, measured production. Considering the assortment of sounds that Rainbow Arabia draws upon, the economical construction of every track here is striking, providing a hardened melodic core for Tiffany Preston's charmingly affected vocal to interface with.

It's the pop parts that stick out at first, but the more nebulous, sinuous tracks of the album's middle section, including "Papai" and the creeping "Jungle Bear," gradually reveal themselves as standouts on par with the catchier material. "This Life Is Practice" kicks off a strong closing trio of tunes riding sublime synth sequences, wrapping, appropriately, with a song called "Sequenced," which pairs Tiffany's forlorn wail with ringing guitar chords to hypnotic effect.

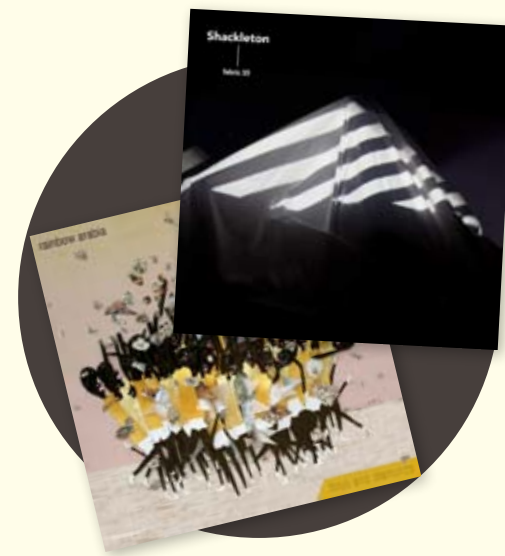
With *Boys and Diamonds*, Rainbow Arabia has refined its various sonic fascinations, incongruous though they may at first seem, into the band's most intriguing, inviting release yet. *Michael Harkin*

SALVA

COMPLEX HOUSING

Friends of Friends

There are many meaningful artistic layers to San Francisco producer Paul Salva's debut, *Complex Housing*. First, there's the title's clever play on housing complexes—prefab city dwellings where people live fascinatingly intricate lives. Similarly, Salva's album initially sounds like standard computer-driven urban music, but listen closer and plenty of twists, variations, and colorful nuances pop out unexpectedly. Salva is in league



with other contemporary crunk-bass programmers such as Lazer Sword, Eskmo, Shiget, and Teebs, as his sounds are grounded with thick, punchy lead synth riffs, arpeggiated electronic sequences, and plodding handclap beats. "40 Karats," for example, features sleazoid soul vocals from Tuscon's Zackey Force Funk and sounds like an OutKast/Zapp hybrid with its funky, low-slung bass grooves and sexy raps. But the songs on *Complex Housing* don't linger on one path too long—"Keys Open Doors" bubbles and shakes with percussive UK funky rhythms while "Baroque" walks with glistening padded steps into future-garage territory. Amid the blurred bass genres, Salva's musicality and command of his virtual instrument arsenal is impressive—dude can program a beat with the best of them—but his keyboard mastery is what shines most. Along with the album's 10 original compositions, guests like Lazer Sword's Lando Kal, Machinedrum, and labelmate My Dry Wet Mess remix four of the album's ringers. The result is party grooves without a genre agenda. The songs slap, spasm, and gallop in a wonderfully complex beat orgy. This house is on fire. *Tomas Palermo*

SHACKLETON

FABRIC 55

Fabric

Beginning with his dark 2004 debut, "Stalker," and continuing with his collaborations with Appleblim on the trailblazing Skull Disco label and a move to Berlin, where he continues his danceable experiments in evil dub and tribal techno, Englishman Sam Shackleton has always seemed like a man with a steady plan. But his new mix CD, *Fabric 55*, suggests that perhaps none of it was

planned at all. Instead, what we've likely been hearing has been the sharing of an increasingly vivid and intimate stream of (un)consciousness.

Spread across 22 of his own tracks, some released here for the first time, the mix rides the back of Shackleton's signature percussive elements—bongos, soul claps, muted bass drums—and weaves in droning bass vibrations and hypnotic, dreamlike vocal samples. If you're a Shackleton fan, you've heard this all before, but not in this hallucinatory context, not via the producer's own hand.

An alternate version of the melodramatic "Death Is Not Final" is squeezed into the middle of the set, but it merely goes with the flow. It sets up "International Fires," one of the new ones, which finishes with one of the dirtiest basslines you've heard anywhere in Shackleton's entire dirty oeuvre. More bass in your face comes from another unreleased track, "Deadman," while North African and psychedelic disco rhythms combine to give the also-fresh "Bottles" a sonic quirkiness that carves out new territory for an artist reaching another level of his already impressive game. *Walter Wasacz*

CLIVE TANAKA Y SU ORQUESTA

JET SET SIEMPRE NO. 1

Tail Corn

Remember tracking Italo-disco producers across cryptic initials on LP jackets? Or trying to figure out which Skam Records releases were by Autechre or Boards of Canada? The pre-Wikipedia era shrouded many new records in a gentle fog of mystery, and Japan's Clive Tanaka is bringing a bit of that mystery back with *Jet Set Siempre No. 1*. Previously available only as a cassette that could be ordered directly from his website, the album is now available on vinyl and digitally, but there's still precious little info here beyond Tanaka's name, a beachy little cover graphic, and sides A and B designated "For Dance" and "For Romance," respectively.

Even more mysterious: "Su Orquesta" sounds more like Tanaka's vintage synthesizers, vocoder, and laptop (there's no Latin band here), and both sides contain lush, inviting retro electro-pop tracks executed with such style that he's the equal of any '80s pop fetishist working today. "I Want You (So Bad)" is a master class in warm pop melody, passing the torch between synthesizer, understated guitar, and more, as it piles layers of sound into a delicious cake and uses its only lyrics—a vocodered recitation of the title—to create a catchy hook with a Daft Punk-like ease and efficiency.

The flip side of *Jet Set* drifts away into an easy fog, floating compressed strings over narcotic beats, conjuring a Mediterranean getaway soundtrack by bright township guitars and analog synthesizer washes recorded on an ancient reel-to-reel. More of all of this please, mysterious Mr. Tanaka! *Rob Geary*

Bubblin'



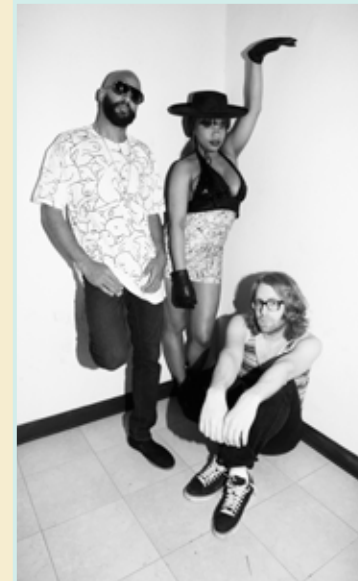
Laurel Halo

Brooklyn, NY



While the washy synthscapes and peppy drum-machine beats of her debut EP, *King Felix*, underscore Laurel Halo's place in the current class of Brooklyn bedroom producers turning out leftfield electronic pop, her music is also marked by a sheen and wondrous nature that recalls vintage 4AD. Maybe it's the many years she spent training and playing classical piano, the time spent in various orchestras, free-improv ensembles, and noise groups, or perhaps the lengthy stint as a college radio DJ, but the 25-year-old artist born Ina Cube displays real songwriting maturity and an ability to deliver emotive material without venturing into tortured-art-school-student territory. Initially self-released, *King Felix* was recently reissued with a new edit from Oneohtrix Point Never on the Hippos in Tanks label, which will be releasing another Laurel Halo EP this spring. A debut album is in the works, as is a split 7" with CFCF and a few other odds and ends. soundcloud.com/laurelhalo

Guest Reviews: Cubic Zirconia



Cubic Zirconia is a motley assemblage of music makers, a group that dabbles in house, disco, electro, R&B, and hip-hop, but can always be relied upon to deliver plenty of sleek, slinky synths (courtesy of Nick Hook and Daud Sturdivant) and sultry funk (courtesy of stylish frontwoman and former *XLR8R* covergirl Tiombe Lockhart). Over the past year, the DIY trio has released a number of singles ("Fuck Work," "Black & Blue," "Josephine," "Hoes Come Out at Night"), all of which were accompanied by crush-inducing videos with Lockhart front and center. The group also found the time to remix Kid Cudi and EGYPT1983, but most of their efforts went into the debut Cubic Zirconia full-length, *Follow Your Heart*, which comes out in February on LuckyMe. Curious to sample some of the sounds inspiring CZ's wide-ranging sonic palette, we asked Hook and Lockhart to share some of their recent favorites.

KRYSTAL KLEAR TRIED FOR YOUR LOVE

All-City

Another great record from Dublin's All-City label. Four dusty, analog-laced synth tracks. It's got the early-'80s rollerskating/BBQ feel we love, a sound that's blown up this year with Dam-Funk leading the pack. Two standout tracks: "Dekryptic" and Hudson Mohawke's re-work of the title track. Hud Mo's remix has a great New York '90s piano-house feel that's been working great in our DJ sets and for our lives in general.

AZARI AND III INTO THE NIGHT

Scion AV

We met Cedric from Azari and III around 6 a.m. after DJing EGYPT1983's release party in Toronto. From what we can recall, he played their songs for us on MySpace and called us "boo" MANY times. We love this band so much. You can tell the production cats have all the ill synths and drum machines and are working them to perfection. Cedric's vocal is always touching.

DROP THE LIME HOT AS HELL

Trouble and Bass

DTL 3.0 begins here. Drop the Lime traded in his LFO in for harmonicas and guitars, but still kept it ready for clubs. We see the haters coming for this one, but it seems like the logical progression in DTL's growth. He's never afraid to take a chance to push new ground. Canblaster delivers my favorite remix of the bunch, as horses and flutes battle gunshots with rave chords as a backdrop. Probably a good look to begin riding Canblaster's dick now.

KANYE WEST MY BEAUTIFUL DARK TWISTED FANTASY

DeJJam

"Fat booty Celine Dion"... "We met at Borders"... "Yezy reupholstered my pussy"... You know, we were very confused before about how to write our next record. It's very clear now. Thank you.

soundcloud.com/cubiczirconia



ELIPHINO

London, UK

Like many producers, Leeds native Tom Wrangmore took to beatmaking at a young age, saving up from his "awful call-center job" to buy a MPC and start making music. His first productions were strongly influenced by hip-hop, garnering comparisons to artists like Madlib and other LA experimentalists based on his *Out of Phase* and *Made Seasons* EPs. Now residing in London, he's broadened his sound palette and has begun mucking about with house and garage, getting a track signed to Gilles Peterson's *Brownswood Electric* compilation, and most recently dropping the *Undivided Whole* EP on the somethinksounds label.

soundcloud.com/eliphino



GATEKEEPER

New York, NY

Gatekeeper's music has a decidedly spooky aesthetic, and it's one that can be traced back to members Aaron David Ross and Matthew Arkell's Chicago art-school days. The pair met in 2005, and found inspiration in a YouTube video of electronic music pioneer Mark Shreeve covering John Carpenter. After that, the duo set about combining techno, Chicago house, Italo, and a heavy dose of industrial into a dark-yet-dancefloor-friendly brew. Their debut single, "Optimus Maximus," dropped in late 2009 and was followed last December by *Giza*, a new EP accompanied by a series of similarly dark-minded videos.

myspace.com/iiigatekeeperii



GHOSTPOET

London, UK

When it comes to quality hip-hop, the UK's record is spotty at best, but that hasn't stopped 24-year-old Obaro Ejimiwe from getting into the game. Another Gilles Peterson favorite, he sports a remarkably laid-back, almost sleepy flow and cites a number of disparate influences, from MF Doom and Fela Kuti to Squarepusher and Badly Drawn Boy. Last June, he released a free four-track EP, *The Sound of Strangers*, and will be following it up with his debut full-length, *Peanut Butter Blues & Melancholy Jam*, this February.

thescrawfsofghostpoet.blogspot.com



T. WILLIAMS

London, UK

Tesfa Williams spent much of 2010 making a name for himself in house music circles, but the UK producer originally got his start as Dread D, a member of legendary grime crew Black Ops. These days he's one half of the Deep Teknologi production duo and label, but his solo releases on labels such as PTN, Enchufada, and Local Action—for whom he produced the label's debut 12" and the more recent "Heartbeat" single with singer Terri Walker—have solidified his name as a singular artist. He also teamed up with L-Vis 1990 for a track on the *Night Slugs Allstars* compilation, and plenty more is on the way in 2011.

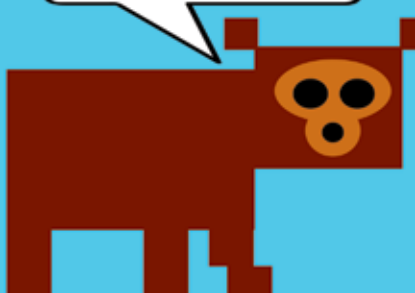
soundcloud.com/twilliamsdeepteknologi

CONSTANT FLUX


BUILDING BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS COMING SOON

Using a vast array of sound synthesis techniques and technology, Constant Flux crafts eerily beautiful sonic textures that take on a life all their own. His music continues to be informed by urban architecture and infrastructure, as well as by forms found in nature.

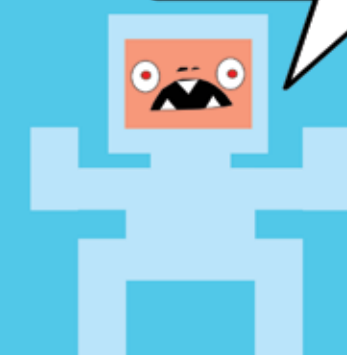
Editorial remarks about past releases




Constant Flux spews his beats over fluid backgrounds, creating a clear-yet-cluttered style that fills your ears but never overwhelms them. — **Mixer**



Many of the tracks feel like love songs for artificially intelligent beings. — **Remix**




L.A.-based producer Douglas Rimerman aka Constant Flux brings IDM in for a landing, taking the genre's outer-space vibe by the hand and leading it to the edge of the dance floor. The result is a moving collection of experimental breaks that may not satisfy strictly dance types but will surely inspire head-bobbing and shoulder jerking for those with ears as open as their minds. — **San Francisco Examiner**



CONSTANT FLUX

Constant Flux is a member of ASCAP and The Recording Academy.



MILES WHITTAKER: IN THE STUDIO



WORDS: WALTER WASACZ

THE MAN BEHIND PENDLE COVEN AND DEMDIKE STARE TALKS ABOUT LIFE-CHANGING CONSOLES.

Miles Whittaker is the long, tall, shaggy-haired Lancastrian gentleman behind the dub/tech/house monikers MLZ and Millie, and one half of the groups Pendle Coven, with Gary Howell, and Demdike Stare, with Sean Canty of the Finders Keepers vinyl collective. All his projects are different but share a dark, autumnal, primeval vibe. With Demdike Stare, especially, Whittaker has been on a tear of late, releasing three LPs of original material—a cryptic marriage of techno from Detroit and Berlin circa '93, British hardcore/rave of roughly the same period, and imaginary soundtrack/library recordings by way of Asia Minor—and two mix CDs in 2010 alone. We tracked down Whittaker in his studio in the borough of Pendle, about 30 miles outside of Manchester, to hear more about the projects.

XLR8R: How does place, in particular the north of England, where you're from, affect your production, its tones and overtones?

Miles Whittaker: It's definitely influencing the music. The weather is wet, grey, and oppressive most of the year, the countryside is bleak, and the culture quotient leaves a lot to be desired. The post-industrial landscapes that have appeared in the last couple of decades have made this part of the UK quite devoid of growth in both economic and cultural terms; of course, this can be turned into inspiration if one is objective enough.

Describe your work space and the type of gear we'd find there.

The set-up varies wildly, as I'm a little obsessive about rebuilding the studio into different configurations, which happens roughly every two months. At the moment it's quite minimal, and consists of a 1980s 24-into-8 modular console, three monosynths (Roland TB-303 and SH-09, and Teisco 60F), a Waldorf XT, six delay units (from a self-modded Powertran DDL, which doubles as a simple 12-bit sampler, to a Roland Space Echo RE-201), four filters (Waldorf 4-Pole, Akai MFC42, and two hand-made band-pass filters), a modded TR-606, an Elektron Machinedrum, and an Akai S1000 and S3000XL. There are also four patchbays, three compressors and various other outboards, mics, DAT, ADAT, and a MacBook Pro with a Focusrite Pro40, running Logic for recording and Ableton for sequencing.

What goes on in your head while you're producing? Is it more an unconscious or conscious process?

It's a strange one. Personally I've always worked with engineering problems, and the tracks are kind of a byproduct of this process. I'll set myself a problem to fix, and make tracks along the way. I'm very particular about recording everything: I press record before I turn the rest of the kit on, as some of the older pieces of equipment do the craziest things when you turn them on. My most important instruments are the console and

the patchbays, which is probably the best insight into how things happen. A good console can change your life, and patchbays make everything possible. It's obviously different with different people and projects, but I'm mainly a producer and engineer, not a musician.

Do you have a separate mindset for each project you do? How does Demdike Stare differ from Pendle Coven? MLZ from Millie?

Definitely, technically and creatively, each project is different. This is what makes it more interesting for me. Pendle Coven comes from a long history of jamming sessions—that's how all the tracks are realized, through Gary and I getting together and improvising until we're happy or lucky enough to get a good take. Demdike Stare is all about records and the archive of aural culture from the last 50 years, coupled with hardware, hence it's a very sample-centric project. MLZ is probably the most traditional-sounding of my projects, more because of what's been released than any actual traditional intent. Millie was derived for more forward-thinking dancefloor tracks, things which wouldn't fit anywhere else, and also enabled both me and Andy Stott [the Andrea in Millie & Andrea] to have an outlet for some of the more steppey-based material.

In all your projects, the music sounds authentically human. How or where does this come from?

An intrinsic desire to get that human feel into the tracks. Hardware, triggers, sync instead of MIDI, room noise recorded in the background... all of it goes into the music. I'm a firm believer that hardware injects a certain *je ne sais quoi* into all the music I make. Hardware has its own character—even the same model synths can sound very different due to component decay or the environment. I find it very difficult to write pure software-based tracks. I believe there is a lot you can do with the new technology, but not a lot of people actually push the envelope where software is concerned. Most people are trying to find a cheaper and easier way to have a great studio, and software gives you that.

In contrast, a lot of contemporary electronics-based music appears increasingly lifeless: The mechanics are sound, but the heart and soul are missing. Comment?

Too much influence and not enough individuality. Many people, myself included, started producing because of influential music. But emulating someone else's music without injecting something personal into what you're doing will only deliver a shade of what you've heard. The idea is to add to the exploration of music, and its techniques, rather than rinse and repeat.

Demdike Stare's *Triptych* is out now on Modern Love. myspace.com/mlzms

HORSEPOWER PRODUCTIONS'

TAPE DELAY TIPS

Back in 2002, UK outfit Horsepower Productions graced the cover of *XLR8R*, an issue that has become somewhat infamous for being one of the first publications to mention the word dubstep in print. Nine years later, even as the genre they helped create has mutated wildly, Horsepower Productions' Benny III is still at it, so we asked him to pass along a few studio tips from a low-end master. He was more than happy to oblige. "Did you ever dial up that tape-delay simulation plug-in on your DAW or digital FX unit, and find that although it provides a great effect, it just doesn't sound quite as good what you heard on that classic '60s or '70s material that inspired you to use it in the first place?" he asked. "Well, fear not, because we have some great ideas for you tape-delay lovers out there. If you can't fake it, make it for real!" he enthuses. According to III, it's true that to make good dubstep, you've got to be a steady hand at *dub*. Ken Taylor

The Bare Necessities

First, you need a mixing board with at least two working channels, and one auxiliary send (which will be your FX send) and some channel EQ. You'll also need a tape machine that has variable pitch (speed) and separate record and playback outputs (i.e. one in which you can record and listen to the playback at the same time). So many options, so experiment with what you can find. The cheapest is probably a studio cassette deck like a Tascam, which you can pick up for \$30-\$50. The more expensive choices range from multitracks to 1/4-inch and 1/2-inch reel-to-reels. We happen to use the Studer A80 two-track deck, which you can find for under \$300 if you look hard enough.

The Connection Is Made

Send your source sound to one of the channels on the board and connect the tape deck record input to the auxiliary (FX) send. Now connect the playback output of the deck to another channel on your board.

The Fun Part

While your source sound is playing, hit record on the tape deck and begin to send some of the source sound to the tape from the aux send control of its channel. You will now hear the delayed version accompanying the sound coming out of the other channel, which you can adjust levels, EQ, and pan as desired. Now that will give you a single delay and you can adjust the tape speed (pitch) to make the delay longer or shorter depending on the range of the pitch control. You can also modify the pitch control to extend the range if you are handy with a soldering iron and some cheap components.

Repeat

If you want repeated delays, which is the usual choice, all you have to do is send the tape channel back to itself using the aux send on its channel. With this control, you can vary the length of the feedback by adjusting the level carefully. This is akin to the feedback setting you will find on your delay plug-in or delay unit. Watch out! Big feedbacks can get very

loud, so to make sure you don't blow your speakers, I recommend using a limiter for that channel, or a quick hand on the monitor level.

Change It Up

If you mess with the EQ on the tape channel, combined with the fader and aux levels, you can achieve a multitude of different combinations. Increase the high-freq EQ and reduce the lows and you'll saturate the tape with the high feedback and get a rising filter effect on the delays. Likewise, if you EQ the lows and drop out the tops, you get a falling filter effect—the echoes get duller as they fade away. Of course, there are thousands of possible settings. By manipulating the controls "live," you can achieve variable effects such as letting the echoes almost die away and then increasing the feedback so they come back slowly—a popular dub trick. The possibilities are limitless, so have fun with it but watch your input levels!

Horsepower Productions' *Quest for the Sonic Bounty* is out now on Tempa. tempa.co.uk

dubspot

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01 / '11 COMPONENTS

Native Instruments Traktor Kontrol S4

MSRP: \$999; native-instruments.com



With Kontrol S4, Native Instruments has developed its most ambitious entry into the DJ game to date. Essentially a physical extension of NI's Traktor software, the S4 integrates four-deck control with a four-channel digital mixer and audio interface. It's bundled with its own unique version of Traktor Pro, designed specifically for the S4; essentially, this is an all-in-one DJ solution that takes much the same approach to hardware/software integration as NI's Maschine, and shares many of its design sensibilities. While it lacks the tank-like metal construction of a high-end turntable or mixer, it's a very well-crafted unit.

Where the S4 excels is in letting the user get endlessly creative with sampling, setting up cue points, and creating loops on the fly. Within 15 minutes, I was remixing tracks in real-time in a way that would be impossible with lesser hardware, and there's an elegant consistency to the user interface that makes things as intuitive as possible. Recording, playing, and changing the size of samples, adding and manipulating FX, and juggling loops rarely requires you to look up at the computer, and the full hardware control (including independent knobs to control both the size and position of loops) allows for some amazing creative freedom.

Of course, all of this getting freaky requires your tracks to be beat-matched, and this is where digital solutions tend to fall short. Traktor has excellent beat-detection algorithms, and when you're matching two songs with distinct beats, it's pretty smooth sailing: sync the incoming track, nudge it a bit with the jog-wheel to get them in line, and you've got a locked mix to go crazy with. When you need to manually beat match, the S4 lets you do so; the jog wheels have a nice weight and sensitivity, and scratch DJs can channel the wiki-wiki gods despite their small size. But these are not "active" platters, and if you're used to mixing actual spinning records with plenty of torque, getting used to mixing with two inert jog wheels will definitely take some getting used to. *Evan Shamoon*



Pioneer HDJ-500 Headphones

MSRP: \$125; pioneerelectronics.com

Pioneer has a rich history in the professional DJ equipment market, of which "budget" or "entry-level" have rarely been terms associated with its products, but with a constantly growing population of mixmasters, Pioneer has produced these headphones to be affordable for the beginners with the reputation for quality that is associated with its higher-end lines. The HDJ-500s are designed to be DJ headphones with a remarkably full and punchy bass and mid-range response, even at lower levels, so that you can keep the beat in the loudest of circumstances. Like most things Pioneer, the headphones feel solid enough to survive some serious situations. Of course, as often is the case with entry-level products, there are some compromises (some may find them a little tight around the ears), but Pioneer has put their resources in the essential qualities you would want in a DJ headphone and at an extremely reasonable price.

Glenn Jackson

M-Audio Axiom 49 MIDI Controller

MSRP: \$439; m-audio.com

The latest iteration of M-Audio's mid-range Axiom 49 features the decidedly high-end feature that is semi-weighted keys. Eight rubberized trigger pads (think M-Audio's own Trigger Finger) provide an alternative input mechanism, as do the nine mixer-style faders and eight rotary knobs dotting the device. The company's homespun DirectLink mode, which is built to automatically work with Pro Tools, Logic, Cubase, Live, and Reason, includes transport, mixer, track pan, and virtual instrument parameters. Likewise, the dedicated Instrument button instantly maps the controls to whatever virtual instrument you're using (as with all auto-mapping software, however, mileage may vary). An LCD screen atop an angled top panel makes for nice ergonomics, and USB bus power rounds out the package. Nothing groundbreaking here, but a solid keyboard controller for both stage and studio. *ES*



Korg Electribe EMX-1 SD Sequencer/Synthesizer

\$499; korgusa.com

When the Electribe EMX-1 sequencer/synthesizer launched, Ableton Live and Reason were only a few years young. Now software's infinite possibilities are ubiquitous, but a dedicated groovebox still provides a certain presence. Indeed, immediacy propels the EMX-1 SD, with an updated SecureDigital card-storage slot and PCM sample banks, introducing contemporary genres such as mnml, chiptune, and dubstep. But what's not changed is key: Slider-ribbon arpeggiator controls inject feeling and an analog tube stage provides saturation. Whether custom-sculpting envelopes or oscillators on each of 16 steps or recording realtime triggers and parameter modulation (knob movement is printable to pattern playback), tone modeling the five mono synths and nine drum parts is intuitive to chain. Ultimately, the best applications are augmenting tempo-synced performances (even as an external audio filter or MIDI time/movement generator) or looping gain-rich parts for a DAW (or sampler such as brother unit ESX-1 SD). The focus is narrow in the best way, concentrating on spurring discovery and drive.

Tony Ware

Dead Space 2

EA; Xbox 360, PS3



2008's *Dead Space* was a breath of sickeningly fresh, freaky air, telling the sci-fi tale of everyman engineer Isaac Clarke as he uncovered a conspiracy involving delusional space cults, dementia-inducing alien artifacts, and a virus capable of turning corpses into fleshy nightmares of teeth and claws. *Dead Space 2* revisits Isaac in an orbital colony known as The Sprawl after he awakens from a coma brought on by the events of the first game. Unfortunately for him (and everyone else), the nasty Necromorph virus he battled in the depths of space seems to have found its way to his new accommodations, unleashing unholy hell throughout the colony in the form of lunging ghouls with face-melting vomit and child-sized monstrosities who want nothing more than to jump on your chest and rip out your lungs... the hard way. New weapons such as the javelin gun join old favorites like the plasma cutter and flamethrower as you dismember your way through the increasingly isolated halls of The Sprawl, battling not only the undead but your own ever-growing psychosis as well. And while no one may be able to hear you scream in space, they will certainly be able to watch you get butchered, or do it themselves, as online multiplayer gets thrown into the mix this time around, allowing for four-on-four teams of engineers versus the nasty Necromorphs. Moody, frightening, and extremely gory, *DS2* cements the series' spot in the upper echelons of sci-fi gaming glory. *Ryan Rayhill*

World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

Blizzard Activision; PC, Mac



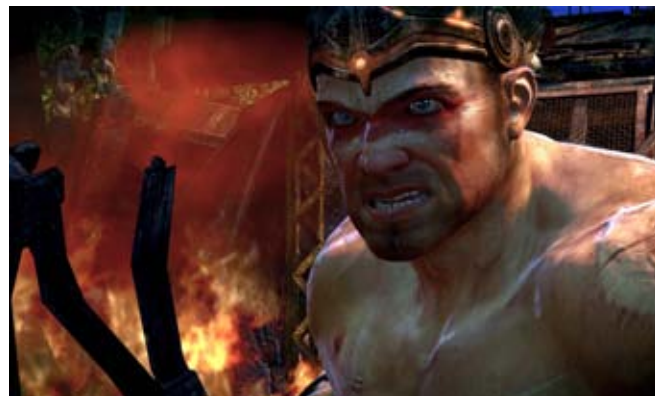
Shhh. You hear that? It's the sound of millions of people's precious time being happily poured down the toilet as they load up *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*, the latest expansion in the most popular online RPG of all time. Expanding the game's lore by unleashing an ancient dragon whose very presence has altered the geography of the known world (hence the title), *Cataclysm* gives seasoned players and no0bz alike (if there is such a thing anymore) thousands of new things to do, acquire, fight over, and complain about, including two new character races, the fierce Worgen (werewolves) and the cunning Goblins (goblins). In addition to redesigned maps and new races, the expansion increases the level cap, adds over 3000 new quests, adds several new dungeons and raids while upping the ante on older ones, and now allows for air travel in previous no-fly zones. For those of you with five level 80 alts in addition to your epically geared main, I don't need to sell you here. For those who have no idea what I just said, then just know this—*Cataclysm*, and *World of Warcraft* in general, offer an absolutely immersive experience that's unlike anything else out there. Just make sure you have a lot of free time that you won't feel bad using to collect dozens of animal hides, magic shards, and swords that don't really exist. *Ryan Rayhill*

Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective

Capcom; DS



When you only have seconds to stop the murder of a beautiful young woman in a dark alley, your options may seem somewhat limited. They probably seem even more so when you yourself are already dead. But if anything, *Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective* proves that even death cannot stand in the way of a little creative problem-solving as you guide the spirit of a delightful scamp named Sissel in order to discover how he wound up a stiff, and prevent the same from happening to others by rewinding time, possessing inanimate objects, and listening to the advice of a very wise desk lamp. Reminiscent of old point-and-click adventures of yore like *Space Quest* and *Out of This World*, *Ghost Trick* will likely have you tapping madly on your DS in an attempt to possess various objects like tires, industrial fans, and Christmas ornaments in order to save lives and unravel the truth about your own demise. Ultimately, *Ghost Trick*'s addicting puzzles, stylish presentation, and jazzy soundtrack amount to one charming title worthy of this world or the next. *RR*



Enslaved: Odyssey to the West

Namco; Xbox 360, PS3

Based loosely on the old Chinese fable "Journey to the West," *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West* follows the tale of a poor guy named Monkey. As if that weren't unfortunate enough, Monkey lives in a futuristic Earth fraught with giant robots hungry for man-flesh and a female partner that has forced him into helping her by placing a headband upon his skull that could kill him. Rough times! Written by the guy who wrote *28 Days Later*, Alex Garland, along with Gollum himself, Andy Serkis, *Enslaved* features plenty of martial-arts combat, robot smashing, and the sort of tense situations that only partnership in which one person threatens the other with certain death can create. *RR*

Lost in Shadow

Hudson; Wii



Being hung by the neck at the top of a castle is a pretty miserable way to spend your day. But when insult is added to injury by having your shadow lopped off and tossed off the top of said castle, then you know someone has got to pay. *Lost in Shadow* follows the story of one guy's silhouette as it scales the enemy stronghold in an attempt to reconnect with its dangling owner. The catch is, since you yourself are mere shade, only shade itself—or the manipulation thereof—will be of any use to you in your ascent to the pinnacle as you solve puzzles and battle other unfriendly shadows. Luckily, gravity won't be much of a hindrance since you weigh almost nothing, and a helpful little nymph has also got your back when it comes to those hard-to-reach spots. The ambient soundtrack is also of note here, adding unparalleled mood to what is an already enchanting world that is as reminiscent of classics *Ico* or *Shadow of the Colossus* as Wii owners will find. *RR*

Tron: Evolution

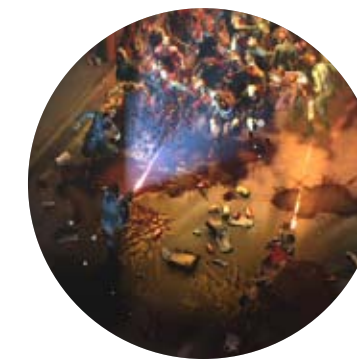
Disney; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii



It's wild to think that the amount of programming and digital memory that went into the computer effects of the original *Tron* likely wouldn't support your little sister's Tumblr page of Justin Bieber GIFs today. But that's just science, man. It's also science that *Tron*'s recent rebirth is fucking awesome, and with that awesomeness comes *Tron: Evolution*, the videogame prequel to the movie sequel (*Tron: Legacy*) to a film about videogames from 30 years ago (plain old *Tron*). Wrap your brain around that one, professor. *Evolution* has you playing as Anon (really?), a program created by Jeff Bridges specifically to investigate a growing conspiracy within Tron World. As you traverse the neon disco landscape, you must de-res the resistance using your light discs, light cycles, and the type of martial arts skills that only the Dude could bestow upon you, presumably also having to do with light. Online multiplayer and a soundtrack that includes some of Daft Punk's cuts from the latest film sweeten the deal for fans of the films, light, or awesomeness. *RR*

Dead Nation

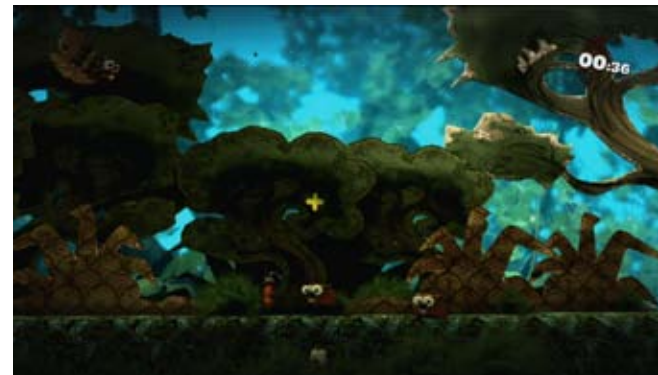
Sony; PS3



Story-wise, you already know the formula on this one: Virus + Humanity = Zombie Apocalypse. Fine. But what sets zombie-killing gem *Dead Nation* apart from the rest is its old-school, cheeky, arcade approach à la *Smash TV*. Co-op play! Explosions! Blood! It's all here! Alone or with a friend, you play as one of the survivors, naturally, using whatever heavy weaponry you can purchase out of a vending machine, of course, to—what else?—kick serious zombie ass! Fun! With literally hundreds of ghouls on-screen at once, you can aim your lazer scope almost anywhere and splatter some brains with the guarantee that there are plenty more where that came from. The real entertainment here comes when you are able to lure a horde of the hungry scamps with a nearby vehicle's car alarm—which they hate, apparently—and then blast away at the gas tank, creating a spectacular display of fire, crimson goo, and body parts. While zombies are getting played out on just about every medium, *Dead Nation*'s top-down perspective, slick use of lighting, and deluge of walking dead make for a unique zombie adventure that any action fan won't be able to resist. *RR*

LittleBigPlanet 2

Sony; PS3



Let's talk about Sackboy! In *LittleBigPlanet 2*, you once again take control of the affable little burlap chap with one of the more unfortunate names in gaming to whose world is being sucked clean by a giant vacuum in the sky called the Negitivitron. While you must jump, grapple, and solve puzzles in order to progress and put an end to the kinda-cute destruction of your adorable world, *LBP2* really shines in the game's creation mode. While you could create your own levels and games in the first game, this version offers a much wider selection of tools at your disposal. The ability to create shooters, racers, adventures, and puzzles that you can then upload for others to play also allows the freedom to construct enemies, obstacles, traps, or just plain nonsense in almost anyway you see fit. Want to place an army of little Sackbots in the path of a would-be protagonist? Go for it. Want to require motion controls in your multiplayer level? Mazel Tov. Speaking of motion controls, when it comes to multiplayer, Sony's Move controller enhances the experience to a surprising degree, requiring each player to master a different move set to help each other progress. With a charming solo game, an interesting multiplayer dynamic, and the ability to create an infinite amount of games within a game, *LittleBigPlanet 2* will undoubtedly endear itself to even the most jaded gamer. *RR*

OUTBOX

DAVID RODIGAN

Reggae has a lot of icons—but probably only one who's white, British, and looks like "a dentist or an accountant" (his words, not ours). The legendary selector David "Ram Jam" Rodigan worked his way through record shops and school dances before making it to Radio London in 1978, where he co-hosted *Reggae Rockers*—and really hasn't looked back since. Besides keeping it fiery in the dancehall (seriously, YouTube the guy), and holding down a Sunday-night slot on London's all-dance station, Kiss 100, Rodigan was recently tapped to contribute installment number 54 of Fabric's venerated *FabricLive* mix series. We got the 59-year-old father of two to tell us about his many nicknames and untouchable dance moves. *Ken Taylor*

XLR8R: How'd you get the nickname Ram Jam?

David Rodigan: It was because I repeatedly played an instrumental by Jackie Mittoo called "Ram Jam," and so my friends started to call me Ram Jam Rodigan. I also had a records shack in a street market where I sold vinyl back in the '70s and it was called Ram Jam's Record Shack.

What's all this "Sir David Rodigan" business about?

The 'Sir' tag has nothing whatsoever to do with me. Promoters just keep putting it on fliers.

What's your favorite Jamaican delicacy?

Ackee and saltfish with fried dumplings for breakfast.

Your dance moves are legendary. Can you teach us one?

Dance moves... haha. I can't teach them because I don't know what they are. I just move to the music as I feel it. No dance move I do is planned or rehearsed. I just have to dance when I am playing music; I have always done it.

So how did a white kid from the UK infiltrate Kingston's reggae scene? Did you encounter much resistance at first?

I have never experienced any prejudice in Kingston. I went there for the first time in 1979 and met people and just kept going back. I had to go because I loved the music so much.

Who's got the bassiest soundsystem of all time?

Sir Coxsone Sound UK, back in the '80s.

What other jobs have you held in your time besides selector?

I worked as an actor in theater in the '70s.

**Have you got any kids? If so, do you ever embarrass them with impromptu sound clashes in the living room?**

Yes, I have two sons, aged 25 and 20, and no, I try not to embarrass them. I try to keep the clash thing out of home life as my wife starts yawning!

What's the worst thing that's happened to you on stage?

Every selector's nightmare scenario is when you play a brand-new dubplate at a crucial point in a clash and it's a lead balloon—no forward from the crowd, and worse still if the boos kick in!

Your three favorite current artists are...

Romain Virgo, Etana, and Busy Signal.

In your history as a DJ and radio broadcaster, who's been your favorite interview?

Prince Buster in 1984. He was Jamaica's first big international star in the early '60s who not only recorded his own songs but produced other artists. He was a powerful force as a young independent producer and artist

who formed his own label. He is a fantastic storyteller, and the interview on Capital Radio is still spoken of with reverence by reggae fans in England, as he revealed so much of the early history behind the birth of ska... his clashes with Derrick Morgan, his clashes with Duke Reid and Coxsone, his Voice of the People Sound System, how he had to tough it out to make it.

What's the most important thing to remember when you're on the mic at the dancehall?

To speak clearly and relate to the music you are playing.

If all else fails, what do you do?

If you have nothing constructive or interesting to say, then keep quiet and let the music breathe.

What's the last thing you do before you go to sleep each night?

I read one of the Psalms of King David.

David Rodigan's *FabricLive* 54 is out now on Fabric. rodigan.com

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